

The Three Amigos Part III – The Three Amigos Ride Again – Chapter 50 – Manhunt 2

Jakarta...

Hambali depended heavily on CNN to keep him informed. CNN, or so it seemed, was the terrorists' best friend. Not only did CNN have a big mouth, they often invited in so-called expert commentators to give an extra perspective on the news. He had to admit that he'd gotten more than one idea from those expert commentators. And, it served, also, to keep him informed of the activities of his cells. 5 of the 6 men he'd sent to the US had made it in and only a fluke had kept the 6th man out. He'd also learned that the container of explosives he'd sent to the US had made it through and that one of the cells had managed to successfully hijack the truck. At the moment, he was far ahead of schedule and hadn't even picked out the next targets. Fortunately for him, CNN had covered a range of security topics with that special they carried about the changes in DHS, forcing him to eliminate several possible targets. But, his 2 cells were safely tucked away waiting for his orders and they would remain right where they were, blending in, until he sent them their target data.

Washington...

The task group had made an erroneous assumption. They assumed that Hambali only had a single terrorist cell in the US. After a whole lot of discussion, they decided that Hambali, who was usually about a step ahead of them, might be counting on that and they sent a substantial portion of their task force back to Indiana and Michigan. During the course of the investigation and search that followed, an FBI agent ran across a police report filed by some farmer claiming that someone had used his barn without his knowledge. It occurred to the agent that there was an outside chance that the terrorists they were looking for might have been the people who used the barn, though for what purpose, he was unsure. He had a copy of the photo of the tractor's tires tracks and decided that it couldn't hurt to check it out. Imagine his surprise when he found some matching tire tracks at the barn. The agent immediately notified his AIC and the AIC passed the information to the task force. A few hours later, the farm was teeming with agents from the FBI and the ATF, plus a portable FBI crime lab.

The ATF came up empty handed, but the FBI technicians matched the tire tracks to the tractor. They now knew for certain that the terrorists had used the barn, but still had no idea why. As the lab technicians continued to process the scene, someone commented that this remote farm would have made an ideal place for the terrorists to have hidden that trucker's body. That made sense to the AIC and he sent for some cadaver dogs. In the meanwhile he had the agents fan out and start searching for evidence of a grave. Just about the time that the cadaver dogs showed up, a pair of agents happened upon what had all the indications of being a shallow grave, so they took the cadaver dogs to the site. Given the reaction of the dogs, the AIC directed that the gravesite be excavated. Within 30 minutes they found the trucker's body under about 12" of soil.

Meanwhile, in the barn, an evidence technician discovered what turned out to be some black paint droppings, leading them to speculate that the terrorists had used the barn to disguise the trailer. They also realized that even if they had a picture of the container when it left New York, it wouldn't be of much use to them now. That container full of explosives could be anywhere. They decided to concentrate their search in the area between the barn and eastern Ohio, where the tractor had been found, along the I-80 corridor. To this point, US law enforcement was batting 1000.

Gary had gone out on the net at one time and read up on this Hambali character. Maybe it was Time where he'd found the article. Anyway, this Hambali (Riduan Isamuddin), which was a nickname, was one clever SOB. He'd masterminded the 95 thing with the 12 airliners that had never come off and was most likely mixed up in those Bali bombings. Some speculated that he was the real brains behind the 9/11/01 attacks on NY and Washington, but for some reason, since Osama had actually paid to put the plan in motion and used his own people to do it, Hambali never got much media coverage in the US. At one time, he had even been in US custody, for crying out loud (And he is again, sitting in a cell at Gitmo). And though he had been tried and convicted in an Indonesian court, they hadn't been able to convict him of the Bali bombings and he'd only gotten 4 years for treason. He was back on the street and they were looking for him, again, but couldn't find him. Now as with most things, the whole truth would probably never be known.

After the golf cart business, Gary decided that he'd better cool it for a couple of days. Most people would have probably used blue or silver tape on the magazines, too, the color of the bullet tips, but all Gary had was a roll of red tape. Anyway, he wasn't sure whether Clarence was po'd or not and maybe he had gone a little far with the joke. The Citadel had actually put Dr. T on staff, though to preserve Dr. L's feelings, hadn't made him Chief of Neurosurgery.

It had actually taken Gary a couple of days to notice that Sharon had someone take off all of the vinyl siding and stucco the place, like they should have done in the first place. \$5,000 extra for that high-grade vinyl siding and probably another \$5,000 to replace it. He wasn't going to ask, he didn't really want to know how much that boondoggle had cost. But, seeing Damon and Derek had gotten Gary to thinking. He'd feel a whole lot better if the boys were living there with The Three Amigos. Since they'd given the house to Derek and Mary, Gary didn't have any qualms about being an 'Indian Giver' if the circumstances required. Without consulting with Derek, Gary called up a realtor he knew from the Tony days and asked the guy if he had time to drive by the house on Moonraker Rd and get a rough estimate of its market value. The realtor said he'd make the time and drive by then come out to visit with Gary.

Two hours later, the realtor was ringing the doorbell. Gary let him in and they went into the dining room to visit.

"Say, you wouldn't be interested in selling this house, would you?" the realtor said, "I could get you about \$400 thousand in a New York minute."

“Oh really?” Gary replied. “Not interested, but that’s good to know. What about the house on Moonraker Road?”

“I read in the paper some time back about a bunch of you folks sitting out that 11/12/05 mess in a bomb shelter,” the realtor said, “Is that the house?”

“Yes,” Gary replied, “Does that make a difference?”

“Is that bomb shelter still fully operational?” the realtor asked.

“Last time I knew, yes. Say, what’s this all about?” Gary asked.

“I’ve got this client looking for a house like that,” the realtor explained. “The guy has been driving me nuts. He says that he’s willing to go \$350k for the right house. There’s no way that house on Moonraker is worth more than \$275k. But having the functional bomb shelter could push it to say \$300k.”

“OH REALLY?” Gary replied more than a little surprised. “What’s the commission these days on selling a house?”

“10%, but if you decided to sell, you could make it for sale by owner and avoid those all together,” the realtor advised.

By this time Gary was getting pretty excited. So excited, in fact that he either had to use the powder room or pee his pants. And, he needed a minute to think, so he excused himself, took care of business and rejoined the realtor.

“Sharon and I gave that house to my son,” Gary explained when he got back. “But I think I might be able to talk him into selling. I really would like to get all of my kids living out here with the 3 of us.”

“The Three Amigos?” the realtor asked. “I don’t know if you know it Gary, but the 3 of you have become notorious in this area.”

“Good,” Gary said, “Maybe people will learn to just let the 3 of us live in peace. We aren’t getting any younger and we seem to spend more time in the hospital than out.”

“I read about your operations in the AV Press,” the realtor said.

“Dang newspapers are always invading people’s privacy,” Gary remarked.

“Well, the 3 of you put together one hell of a hospital and it’s not every day that we get someone as famous as Dr. T (Asher H. Taban) coming to Palmdale to perform a series of operations on one of our residents,” the realtor observed. “The hospital absolutely refused to give a news conference and that just made it all the more mysterious.”

“Those doctors all know how I feel about reporters,” Gary said, “It’s good to know that they took my instructions to heart. Let me talk to my son and I’ll get back to you in 48-hours or less.”

Gary called Derek after dinner and told him that he needed to see him and Mary right away on an urgent matter. Derek grumbled something about missing some TV show but said they’d be there in about 15 minutes. They were, too.

“Kid, do you like this house we live in?” Gary started out.

“Who wouldn’t?” Derek said.

“I had a realtor over today and he said this house would bring \$400k in a New York minute,” Gary shared, “And he didn’t even know about the shelter. Anyway, I had him drive by your house and he said he could probably get you \$300k for it. What’s the balance of your loan on the house?”

“About \$85 thousand,” Derek said.

“That’s about what I figured Derek,” Gary said. “Now if Mary and you were to sell that house, you could have one like this free and clear.”

“How do you figure that?” Derek asked, “You just said that this house was worth \$400k.”

“I did, didn’t I,” Gary chuckled, “But what I didn’t say was how much they cost to build.”

“Ron and Clarence’s houses cost them \$175k apiece.”

“Quit pulling my leg, Dad,” Derek said.

“So help me kid, \$175k apiece,” Gary replied. “Now, since you’d want a 4-bedroom model, we’d have to go to that earlier floor plan I drew up, but even so, I figure that you can get a new home for around \$200k. The plan divides that master suite on the other end into 2 bedrooms and tacks on a third into the living room area. Plus, it makes that powder room a full bath and moves the bathroom from one end to between the other two bedrooms.”

“I sort of like the sounds of this,” Derek said, “But we’ll have to talk it over.”

“I expected that, kid,” Gary said, “But you might point out that you’d be going from a ½ paid for 1,254 square foot home to a 3,200 square foot home with a full basement, fully paid for.”

The thing about it was, these homes that Gary had designed were a contractors dream when it came to building them. Corners cost money and labor and even the 4-bedroom

model that Gary had on paper had one hell of a lot fewer corners than your typical home. If you actually sat down with the blueprints for both models, the 4-bedroom model only had one more corner than the model that The Three Amigos lived in. Gary sort of figured that building costs had raised some and that the extra corner would add \$5,000, but still, they ought to get the thing built for \$200k.

Of course that didn't solve Damon's problem and he knew that if he started moving the boys out to their little housing area, Sharon would be all over him about moving the girls out there too. Like Damon, Amy lived in an apartment and she hadn't remarried. Lorrie and David had talked about getting married a half dozen times, but had decided that marriage would just mess up a good thing. Society sure had changed since Gary was a young boy. These days, couples seemed to only consider marriage after they'd decided that they were sexually compatible. Hadn't helped the divorce rates much, but there you go.

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After Derek and Mary left, Gary sat down and had a long talk with Sharon. First he explained about Derek's and Mary's home. Then he began discussing the fact that he also wanted Damon out there and that he presumed that she'd want the girls out there. The thing was, he said, he just didn't know how they could manage the whole thing. Sharon asked him if he'd checked the bank balances lately and he admitted that he hadn't. She told him that The Foundation was now paying each of The Three Amigos \$250k a year and that they had a bank balance that was mind-boggling. Not enough, she said to pay for everything, but enough so that if David and Lorrie also sold their home, they could probably come pretty close to paying for everything. And, she went on; for sure there'd be enough equity in the homes that a bank loan was very feasible.

Gary got so excited over the prospect of having all of their kids living with The Three Amigos that it became a 3-Xanax night. He didn't wake up until noon the next day. While Gary was in LA-LA land, Derek had called and talked to Sharon. Mary and he were good to go with his Dad's suggestion. Sharon had picked up the realtor's card from the dining room table and she called the realtor, identified herself and told the guy that their son Derek had his home on the market for sale by the owner. She gave the realtor Derek's phone number and then called Lorrie.

David was home, it was Saturday, and Sharon carefully explained the whole thing to the two of them over the phone. If they were interested, she told them, Gary and she would make it happen. Man, were they ever, especially David. David said that they probably had about \$100k equity in their home after the realtor's commission was paid. Sharon asked David if he'd ever finished that bomb shelter he'd decided to build in his backyard and he told her that it was fully operational. She told David and Lorrie to sit tight, she'd have to talk to Gary, but they might be able to save them the realtor's commission.

Then, Sharon called that building contractor who had built the 3 homes. She asked him if he could come by, she wanted to talk to him. I should point out that when Sharon gets her mind made up about something, she's hell on wheels. And she'd been with Gary an awfully long time and knew just exactly how Gary operated. And, this woman had a mind of her own, at times, and if you were smart you just got out of her way.

Gary had pulled out the older floor plan the night before and reviewed it. He'd left both floor plans lying on the dining room table after he'd taken his Xanax cocktail and gone to bed. Sharon studied the plans to refresh her memory and by the time the contractor showed up around 10:30am, she was very familiar with both sets of plans. The contractor didn't realize that he was dealing with Gary's alter ego and he tried to pull one on Sharon. She cut the guy off at the knees and they got down to a serious discussion. The cost of building materials had indeed raised, but not all that much.

As the contractor studied the floor plan he realized that there was only one more corner in the 4-bedroom floor plan and constructing the home wouldn't take more than a day or

two longer than the other three. The amount of extra building materials was nominal and he figured that he could build the home for about \$185,000 and still make a nice profit. Then Sharon pointed out that the homes were to be stuccoes, and connected to the tunnel system and that she darn well expected that the price he was offering included the tunnels. He was about to tell her that he couldn't do that when she dropped the bomb. They didn't want 1 home, she said, they wanted 4. The contractor agreed right on the spot and said he could begin construction almost immediately. Sharon said that Gary had forgotten to install a blast door for the tunnel system and that it was sitting in the garage, could the contractor handle that too? He told her he'd have someone out there the next day and get the door put in. Finally, Sharon called that realtor back and asked him to check out David and Lorrie's home. It had a bomb shelter in its backyard too.

Gary woke up around noon, but it took him about 3 cups of coffee to get awake. He asked Sharon what she'd been up to and she said, nothing much. When he was finally awake, he did his meds, a Nebulizer treatment and took a shower. She then presented him lunch. While he was eating lunch, Gary commented that he needed to call Derek and find out what Derek and Mary had decided. Sharon informed him that Derek and Mary had sold their home that morning around 11:00am. Then, Gary brought up the blast door and said he needed to talk to the contractor about installing the door and find out how much the new homes would cost. Sharon told him \$185,000, including the tunnels, and that the contractor would be installing the blast door the next day. Construction on the 4 new homes would start in the next few days. By this time, Gary's head was reeling and he looked at his watch to see what day it was. The watch said SAT, but Gary was beginning to wonder which Saturday. Maybe, he thought, I over medicated and slept for a week. Remember that 2,000-calorie diet that the sitar player had put Gary on when he'd gotten out of AV hospital back when? Gary didn't really do all that much and he'd found that if he consumed between 1,200 and 1,500 calories a day that his blood sugar and weight were right on the mark.

About that time the doorbell rang and Sharon got up and answered the door. It was the realtor, again. The 3 of them sat down at the dining room table and the realtor struck up a conversation with Sharon. He'd been by the house, he said, and told her what he thought it would bring. The neighborhood wasn't quite as good as the house on Moonraker, but he had another nut looking for a house with a bomb shelter in the \$275k price range. Sharon suggested that he drive by and talk to David and Lorrie and that she call them and let them know he was coming. He said fine and got up and left. Sharon called David and told him that a realtor would be by in a bit and to pick the house up. They'd probably be able to get about \$275k for their home and that she'd already ordered construction on their new home.

Gary said to hell with it, took a Xanax and went to the basement to play with his computer. He had no idea what was going on, but apparently Sharon had gotten in one of her rare moods and had been busy. He checked the clock on the computer just to be sure he hadn't slept for a week. He checked his email, cleaned up that mess and went to Frugal's to read the latest chapters. After that, he went to the bedroom, turned on the

TV and flopped in his recliner. He changed the channel from HGTV to CNN and began to get up to speed on what was going on.

Some trooper had found the semi in Ohio and some FBI agent had found the farm and later the body of the missing trucker. DHS was running another one of those task forces and they had flooded Indiana and Michigan looking for the terrorist cell. Yep, it was business as usual and his gut was really nagging him. "That Hambali's one smart cookie," he thought, "Hell he probably has 2 or 3 cells in the US this time and they'll never find that container, it's probably sitting in some K-Mart storage area." Close, but no cigar Gar-Bear. And the more that Gary listened to CNN the more he was thinking that they should rename the network TNN, The Terrorists' Network. Gary got to thinking that he sure liked to visit with Ron and Clarence, but he'd better let that lay another day. It seemed like a good time to service the weapons, so he grabbed his M1A, M16 and AL-ICE gear from the closet and headed to the shelter.

He didn't remember leaving the shelter door open, but oh well. When he walked into the storage room, who should be sitting there but Ron and Clarence, cleaning weapons.

"Hey fellas," Gary said, "It seemed like a good time to clean my rifles, but I see that you had the same idea."

"How are you today, Gary?" Clarence asked.

"Well," Gary said, "I got so excited about the possibility of my kids moving out here last night that I took 3 Xanax. I didn't wake up until noon. And by the time I did wake up, Sharon had sold Derek's house, ordered 4 more new homes, and talked to a realtor about selling Lorrie and David's house. There's more, but you get the idea."

"Feeling like a 5th wheel are we?" Ron asked.

"I have no idea how you feel partner," Gary replied, "But I figure I should have just stayed in bed."

"You didn't happen to catch any of the news on CNN did you?" Ron asked.

"I'm think that we ought to rename those SOB's TNN, the Terrorists' News Network," Gary smiled. "Yeah I caught a little news. I see they found the driver and that tractor and have flooded Indiana and Michigan with feds again."

"FOX had some coverage on the container," Ron explained. "Those guys have enough of those high order explosives to blow up half the country. Apparently the only thing they're missing is timers and detonators."

"Hell partner, by this time they probably even have those," Gary replied. "That Hambali is one smart cookie. I wouldn't put it past him to have fixed his boys up with fake ATF explosives cards."

“How many of those terrorists do you think is in the country, Gary,” Clarence asked.

“Who knows, Clarence, probably 2 or 3 cells was what I was thinking earlier,” Gary responded.

“I guess we know what’s behind the threat level being at yellow,” Ron commented.

“If it were I,” Gary observed, “I’d have that sucker at orange and ready to go to red. By the way, did you two know that we’re notorious in this area?”

“Good,” Clarence said, “Maybe people will leave us alone.”

“That’s what I said when I heard,” Gary laughed. “Anyone check our supply inventory lately?”

“The wives have been handling that Gar-Bear,” Ron explained. “They’re doing a pretty good job of it too.”

“I sure do like this Kimber you guys got me,” Gary said.

“That’s nice to hear, Gary,” Clarence said. “You know, I was going to suggest that you quit trying to carry both of those Vaqueros. Those are a pretty heavy load for someone our age.”

“I’d have to agree with you there pal,” Gary said, “Dang handgun is a close up weapon anyway. I think I’ll just get me a new holster for the right side for that short barreled Vaquero and quit trying to pretend I’m Matt Dillon.”

“Matt Dillon?” Ron said, “Hell I thought you were pretending to be Paladin.”

“Actually, Kirkpatrick calls that a Tequila Rig,” Gary explained.

For you younger folks, The Three Amigos were referring to Gunsmoke and Have Gun, Will Travel. Professional gunfighter Paladin was a West Point graduate who, after the Civil War, settled into San Francisco’s Hotel Carlton where he awaited responses to his business card: over the picture of a chess knight (a Paladin) “Have Gun, Will Travel ... Wire Paladin, San Francisco.” Matt Dillon was the Marshall of Dodge City. That Gunsmoke is the greatest TV western of all time is hard to dispute. It may be the greatest TV show of all time. Think of what your favorite show might have been like after 20 years on the air and then compare it to Gunsmoke, which was probably as good as anything on TV for its entire twenty year run.

All the while The Three Amigos were visiting they were cleaning firearms. They had, as you may recall, quite an arsenal. More than ½ of the guns they had were so illegal that regardless of what law came into play, they’d probably end up in jail for the rest of their

lives if they got caught. You may also recall that Johnny Jones was a Lieutenant now with the LA Sheriff's Department and there wasn't anything that Johnny didn't know about what The Three Amigos had on hand. Most of the weapons had been purchased from Sandy, a local gun dealer who also ran a little business on the side. They even had some suppressed MP5's that some feds had no longer needed. Johnny was a very good cop and not much went on in Palmdale that he didn't know about. Apparently he figured that if The Three Amigos minded their P's and Q's, he could afford to leave them alone. But you can darn well bet that if those old guys ever really got out of line, Johnny would be right there with the cuffs.

For years, Gary had been under the misimpression that Clarence had been born in 1939 and was 2 years older than Ronald. Turned out that Gary was mistaken all this time. In fact, Clarence had been born in 1942 and was right between Gary and Ron in age. That was sort of fitting, too. Ron had a bad heart and Gary had really bad diabetes. Clarence had both. As I said earlier, The Three Amigos were recovering alcoholics and if they hadn't had the best medical care possible, they'd have all surely been dead by now. Ron and Clarence had already had bypass surgery but Gary's heart was as fit as a fiddle. On the other hand, Gary had a case of diabetic neuropathy that left his left hand and right foot 70% numb and his right hand and left foot about 30% numb. Gary also had a terrible problem with his short-term memory. And, in 2009, our boys weren't getting any younger, but they sure were getting better. Maybe that comes with age, who knows?

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I can tell you one thing; The Three Amigos had more blind dumb luck than the law allowed and they also must have had guardian angels working overtime. Maybe that was their reward for cleaning up the mess they'd made of their lives as young men and having sobered up. Back in 1992 when Ron had his heart attack and the bypass, he'd actually died. They'd managed to jump-start his heart and here he was, 17 years later doing fine. Ask any doctor how long a coronary bypass is good for. You usually get a number smaller than 17. But, Ronald had lots of angioplasties over the years and Dr. E had managed to keep everything up and running. Ronald had also had prostate cancer and it had saved his life. When they did a treadmill to see if he could handle the surgery, they'd discovered that the arteries in his neck were 98% blocked. Clarence had gone to the doctor with what he thought was a cold. The next thing you knew, he was getting a bypass, too. Then, just to complicate matters, he had a stroke in the recovery room. The Three Amigos were living on borrowed time, but they really didn't care. They planned to live until they died and then were going to kick the Devil's butt.

Dearborn...

"The US has sent many agents into Michigan, my brother, perhaps we should move," the terrorist suggested.

"Moving was what got Ali and his cell killed you fool, if Hambali says that we should stay in Dearborn, then we are not going to move," the leader replied.

"But this waiting wearies me," the first man said.

"Perhaps you would rather be dead," the leader replied. "We have secured the detonators and timers and Hambali knows that we are ready to strike. This American banking system even allows us to use the bank to pay the rental on that space where we have the container stored. Patience, my brother, patience, our time will come."

Three of the four men had been living in Dearborn for some time. The first speaker was one of the late arrivals. Hambali had insisted that the men take jobs in delicatessens, especially those owned by Jewish shopkeepers. Unfortunately, the late arrival had been unable to get a job in a deli and was forced to work in a car wash. Perhaps this explained his impatience, or perhaps there was an entirely different explanation.

New York...

The four new arrivals had located themselves in a Muslim community in New York. As instructed they had taken jobs in delicatessens owned by Jewish shopkeepers. This had proven to be a whole lot easier than for their comrades in Dearborn. Getting the timers hadn't proven to present much of a difficulty, but they'd played hell getting their hands on those detonators. They had finally resorted to theft and had the detonators and they

too were ready to proceed with their mission when instructed to do so. The theft of detonators, taken from an upstate explosives dealer, had been noticed by the dealer and reported to the police and the ATF. The dealer had a good security system and couldn't be faulted. Whoever had stolen the detonators was well schooled in alarm systems. The ATF agent who investigated the theft thought it odd that all the thieves had taken was detonators and he reviewed the bulletins his office had received. Then, when he read the right bulletin, immediately notified Truscott's office as directed by the bulletin.

Washington...

"My agent reported that all the theft involved was detonators," Truscott said.

"And this was in Syracuse?" Mueller asked.

"Yes. The dealer had a pretty sophisticated security system, too," Truscott went, "So whoever did it was pretty well trained in alarms systems. I think, gentlemen, that that terrorist cell has acquired the detonators and I wouldn't be a bit surprised if they didn't already have timers as well."

"What did the CIA's HumInt ever come up with in Indonesia?" Prescott asked.

"Now that's interesting," Goss said. "For one thing Hambali is laying low. But, two of his lieutenants ended up dead a while back. We suspect that those were the two guys that NSA caught on that cell phone conversation, but have no way to be absolutely certain. The US had him in custody at one time. We really screwed the pooch on that one. All the Indonesians were able to convict him of, as you probably recall, was treason."

"We've been assuming that Hambali only has one cell in the US," Mueller observed. "What if he managed somehow to get a second cell into the country?"

"I don't see how that's possible," Prescott said, "Our border security is a whole lot tighter than before."

"Do you remember that problem we had with the French a while back where they wouldn't give us passport information?" Mueller asked. "What if Hambali slipped a bunch through during that period using French passports? I checked and during that time, a guy with a French passport was refused entry because even though the documents checked out, he didn't seem right."

"That pretty thin," Prescott said.

"I'd be the first to admit that Mr. Secretary," Mueller agreed, "But what if?"

"Let's see if I have this right," Prescott said, "What you're suggesting is that during that period that the French were balking at giving us passport information, Hambali took advantage of it and send in what, 2 or 3 additional terrorist cells?"

“Yes sir, stranger things have happened and we all know how clever that SOB is,” Muller replied.

“Any other explosives thefts?” Prescott asked.

“No, but in a lot of states, it a whole lot easier to get explosives than in New York,” Truscott commented. “Anyone who could come up with a French passport could probably come up with a counterfeit AFT Explosives permit. And, by the time the fake permit came to light, the people could be long gone.”

“Is there some way you can check that?” Prescott asked.

“Yes, but it won’t be easy,” Truscott replied.

“Look, you get your folks checking on that and I will visit with President Santorum about what we discussed today,” Prescott directed.

Prescott talked to Santorum about the discussion the task force had. Santorum suggested that they try and field some additional agents in New York State, if possible. He went on to suggest that Indiana probably wasn’t going to yield any results and that perhaps the taskforce might want to consider using the agents in Indiana in New York. After he’d hung up the phone, Santorum muttered something about he’d wished the French had waited a couple of more hours before pulling their troops out.

The FBI pulled its agents from Indiana and the ATF intended to do so as soon as they had a chance to check on the permit numbers from the dealers’ records. They were especially looking at transactions that involved only detonators and timers. The agents in Indiana came up empty, but not so the agents in Michigan. They identified a suspicious transaction at a Detroit explosives dealer’s and further checking revealed that the Explosives license was invalid. Rather than transferring the ATF agents to New York, the entire Indiana group was moved to the greater Detroit area. That’s when the FBI and ATF got lucky. Some of the agents were having lunch in a deli and one of the agents noticed a busboy who bore a striking resemblance to someone he’d remembered seeing on a set of photos of suspected JI members. The agent decided he rather have egg on his face than let a possible terrorist get away and he pointed the busboy out to the other members of his party. Another of the agents agreed that the resemblance was remarkable.

They decided to keep an eye on the busboy and check with their AIC. The AIC suggested that they get a photo and run it through the computer and see if the faces matched. He instructed that in the meantime they maintain the surveillance. The agents got a telephoto digital image of the busboy and ran it through the computer. They got a hit; the busboy was the same guy as in the photo of suspected JI members. When the busboy left work that evening he was covered from 6 different ways. The surveillance teams followed him to an apartment in Dearborn. They immediately set up surveillance

on the apartment. As the terrorists began returning from work, the FBI was busy taking photos and running them through the computer. Before morning, all 4 of the individuals had been identified as possible JI members.

Mueller was following the developments in Detroit closely and he ordered the HRT (the HRT's purpose is to serve as a domestic counter-terrorism unit, offering a tactical resolution option in hostage and high-risk law enforcement situations. It was originally composed of 50 Operators; however, this number has since increased to well over 90 full-time Operators) from Quantico to Detroit at all possible speed. He then passed the information to the taskforce and to Santorum. Santorum was delighted with the news and told Mueller to make darn good and certain that the news didn't leak out. He invoked the little used clear and present danger provision and ordered a total media blackout. As you know, only when there is a clear and present danger to the security of the US can prior restraint be used to bar the media from anything considered newsworthy.

Detroit and Dearborn police were brought in to prevent any of the news media from getting anywhere near the area and all news media choppers were ordered grounded. Both Detroit and Dearborn have SWAT units and they set up to cover the apartment until the HRT arrived. When the HRT arrived later, the 3 units did a most unusual thing; they worked together rather than get into one of those jurisdictional disputes. Unlike the shootout in Burbank, everyone agreed that they wanted to take these guys alive. In fact, the FBI HRT leader flat told the Dearborn and Detroit SWAT teams that there was a possibility that the terrorists had more than one cell in the US and that it was vital to get all 4 men alive, if possible.

By this time the media was raising holy hell and screaming about their 1st Amendment rights. Santorum had his Chief of Staff contact the various media organizations and set them straight. They were told that the blackout was temporary and would be lifted as soon as the situation, whatever it was, was resolved. In the interim, the President had decreed that the situation constituted a clear and present danger to the US. Anyone attempting to circumvent that decree would be arrested because the situation was actually that serious. The media didn't like it, you can pretty much count on that, but, for a change, they did as requested. By this time most of them had pretty much concluded that it somehow involved a terrorist threat.

When the SWAT units and the HRT were in place, they poured into that apartment like a locomotive running wild and managed to subdue the terrorists before they even had time to get out of bed. The word was immediately passed to the White House and Santorum lifted the media blackout. The 4 terrorists were hustled into a FBI van and transported immediately from the scene. Four hours later the 4 men found themselves sitting in FBI headquarters being interrogated in their native language. While there was certainly cause for celebration, Prescott ordered all of the task force members to New York State to follow up on that explosives theft. It was now obvious to the task force that Hambali had at least two teams/cells in the US.

TNN was the first network to break the story. There really wasn't anything to see except

a live shot of the apartment building in Dearborn, but that didn't keep them from speculating. Jakarta is GMT+7. Detroit is GMT-5. At least I think so. Thus when it was 4am in Dearborn, it was 4pm in Jakarta. The SWAT and HRT teams had struck around 4am, local (EST). By 5am the networks were in full swing with the news of the mysterious event in Dearborn. Hambali put 2 and 2 together and came up minus one cell. He had no idea what had gone wrong, but something surely must have. Then, he made an erroneous assumption. He assumed that his Dearborn cell was dead. They might as well have been dead for all the information the FBI was getting out of them. Frustrated, Rick Santorum did a most unusual thing. He ordered Mueller to turn the 4 terrorists over to the CIA. Mueller was shocked at Santorum's order, but he thought about it a minute, smiled and did as ordered. It wasn't any skin of his teeth and he suspected that the CIA probably didn't have much regard for the law in instances like this.

The Agency has some methods that are only speculated about in movies and TV. And you know, of course, that they do have some people on staff with medical degrees, right? Plus waterboarding has proven effective. The 3 terrorists who had been in the US for a while were a total washout, but do you remember the whiner? He wasn't able to tell them how many people had made it in, he didn't really know, but he certainly knew how he'd gotten into the US and between the interrogation and the seized, altered French passports, the task force had their worst fears confirmed. He also mentioned the name New York. Hambali had at least one additional terrorist cell in the US. Since the Dearborn bunch had been able to purchase timers and detonators, the task force was already pretty sure. But the CIA provided them with confirmation. Shortly thereafter, the 4 terrorists were sitting in cells on the southeastern end of Cuba, totally incommunicado. Gitmo is it?

Palmdale...

Gary got up early, made a pot of coffee and stumbled down to the basement to bring up TNN, er, CNN. There were all sorts of wild speculations about a combined SWAT & HRT raid in Dearborn that had occurred overnight. Gary picked up the phone and dialed.

"Ron Green," Ron grumbled.

"Hey partner they got them," Gary said.

"What time is it and what the hell are you talking about?" Ron managed to croak out.

"It's time you had your feet on the floor and there was a combined SWAT and HRT raid in Dearborn a few hours ago," Gary related, "I told you that the Hambali was clever, I'll bet you an even grand that they busted one of his cells last night."

"You're just dumb enough and lucky enough that you could be right Gar-Bear," Ron said. "How about you call me back when the sun comes up?"

“The sun IS up butthead,” Gary retorted, “How about you get off your dead butt and we’ll catch the 9:30 meeting? I’ll call Clarence.”

I won’t repeat what Ron said to Gary. Gary called Clarence and they agreed to catch the 9:30 meeting. Gary told Clarence that Ron would go too, but might not be in the best of moods. Gary hurried up, showered, did his meds, ate a light breakfast and stuck a Hershey bar in his coat pocket, just in case. Now that he had his driver’s license back Gary drove a lot to the meetings. He slipped his M16A3/M203 and ALICE gear into the toolbox on the truck and locked it. The group rather frowned on anyone showing up armed, even on duty cops. There had been more than one scuffle in the room and the Board had outlawed even cops being armed. Of course the Deputies and Cops ignored the Board, but The Three Amigos were inactive Reserve Deputies and they didn’t really qualify as cops.

Ron must have had a good breakfast and a good cup of coffee because his mood was greatly improved. Gary had found a couple of minutes to catch CNN on TV and all he could talk about was the manhunt going on in New York State. He speculated that he’d been right all along and that Hambali had at least one more terrorist cell in the US. It would eventually prove that old Gar-Bear had this one right, but not before a whole lot more heartache was fostered in the country. And the next event would surprise even old Gar-Bear.

The Three Amigos Part III – The Three Amigos Ride Again – Chapter 53 – Meltdown

With that new blast door installed, Gary felt a whole lot better. One day, this short-term memory problem of his was probably going to end up killing him. But if that happened, the Devil had better get ready for that butt kicking. Anyway Gary pretty much began to ignore TNN and the other networks. He figured that they must have busted a terrorist cell and taken the guys alive; otherwise, why all the secrecy? He speculated further that they probably gotten whatever there was to get out of the terrorists and hustled them off somewhere to hide them. If he had been running the show, he'd have taken them to Gitmo and locked them up in solitary. But hell, he was just a tired old man, what did he know?

The feds had moved every single one of their agents to New York so that was probably where the other terrorist cell or cells were located. At least, that was what FOX was saying the few times he'd turned on TV. What Gary didn't know and couldn't have known was that the terrorist cell on Dearborn had been using a bank bill paying system to pay for the trailer space rental. And it took the feds a while to stumble onto it to. It all came down to a scrap of paper. The feds traced the paper to the bank where the terrorist cell had a savings account. They cross referenced the various paydays of the terrorists against the bank's records and eventually identified a savings account where the deposits seemed to flow on the Monday after every payday. Man, talk about thin! Anyway, the account seemed to be used to accumulate money and had started off with a huge deposit. That waved a red flag. The account was also used to pay one bill and the feds started tracking that down. At this point in the investigation the only reason they were sure that the terrorists owned the account was based on a fingerprint taken off the signature card which matched one of the terrorists.

It turned out that the payee was a company that rented storage lots and when an FBI agent showed up at their place of business, they pointed out a trailer that the renter had parked on the lot. That FBI agent must have held his breath until he turned purple. It couldn't be this easy, he thought. When the terrorists had been arrested, they were found to have a padlock key in their possession. The FBI agent called up his AIC and told him that the money was paying for a trailer space and that maybe they ought to get some of those ATF guys and the key they found and see if the trailer held the explosives they were looking for. At first the AIC thought maybe the agent was pulling his leg, but the agent got fairly insistent and the AIC realized that the guy was serious. He told the agent that he best get a hold of the local authorities and clear everyone from the area. If that was the truckload of explosives, it was capable of one mighty big blast.

The FBI agent got the Ohio Highway Patrol on the line and explained the situation to them. The Ohio HP dispatched a single car to the scene, probably to find out what the guy had been drinking. Turned out it the guy really was an FBI agent and he was pointing at a trailer that he claimed could be filled with explosives. The OHP officer must have been rattled or was just having a bad day. He got on his radio and called it in. As probably most everyone knows, one is not supposed to use radios around explosives. I

think it has something to do with the energy from the radio signal causing a detonator to go off, but I'm no explosives expert. That FBI agent must have been a little rattled, too, because it wasn't until the trooper had completed his radio call that the agent realized what the trooper had done. He quickly pointed out to the trooper that although the container wasn't supposed to contain any detonators, they couldn't be sure and maybe the trooper ought to move his patrol car if he had to use the radio again. The trooper realized his mistake and his face turned beet red. No harm, no foul, this time.

It didn't take the ATF and an FBI agent with that key all that long to show up, and the key opened the lock. The ATF people were being very cautious, however, and they made certain that the door wasn't somehow wired to set off the cargo. It probably wasn't or that radio call might have set it off, but they went through the motions anyway. When finally the container was open, they knew that they were finally one up on the terrorists. The word of the capture of the container quickly made its way up the line to the White House. With the capture of one terrorist cell and the container of explosives, Santorum decided that it was finally time to bring the American public up to speed and he scheduled a news conference along with the task force leaders.

At the news conference, Santorum explained about the capture of the 4 terrorists in Dearborn, the reason for the temporary news blackout and that interrogations had led them to discover how the terrorists had made it into the US. He didn't elaborate on this final point. He then went on to explain how a scrap of paper had led to the discovery of the container of explosives in Ohio. He was doing his best to put law enforcement in the best possible light. He concluded his statement with an observation that they were still looking for additional terrorist cells, but again, didn't elaborate. He fielded a few questions and then left. The reporters had about a million questions and the task force members finally had to cut them off, citing an 'ongoing investigation'. The entire news conference was broadcast live on several networks.

Palmdale...

The Three Amigos missed the live news conference, but the networks were giving it a lot of play and it didn't take them long to piece the whole thing together. By this time, construction of the 4 new homes was well underway and the contractor was way ahead of schedule. Gary mostly contented himself 'supervising'. That is to say that he was riding around in that golf cart of his, unarmed, watching the homes come together. By golly these contractors could really throw a home together in a hurry, he was thinking. The fact that the contractor only had to make a single pour of concrete might have had something to do with that, but that never occurred to old Gar-Bear. If you've ever seen them throw these housing tracts together you know what I'm talking about. Once the forms were off that concrete, framing crews came in and in a single day had framed an entire home including installing the Kevlar. The foam went in next followed by the wiring and insulation. Then, while the drywall crews hung the drywall the stucco boys showed up and worked on the outside of the homes. The contractor had called Pella Roll Screen the Monday following his conversation with Sharon and even the bulletproof windows were available when needed. There was only room for 2 more houses in the row and

the other two homes ended up in a second row behind the end homes and on either side of the water tank. If they were going to build any more homes on those 2½-acres, they were out of luck. Gary was going to need to buy more land. Even the money thing worked out and a bank loan was avoided.

All of the homes, by the way, were hooked into that network server Gary had in his basement. Man did that T-1 line hum!

“Did you catch any of that news conference?” Ron asked.

“Sorry partner,” Gary said, “I was too busy supervising construction of the news homes.”

“More like getting underfoot,” Clarence observed.

“No, it wasn’t like that,” Gary insisted. “I left those guys alone, I still have that flippin’ sinking feeling in my gut and I want those homes done and the kids moved in pronto.”

Ron and Clarence took the next 20 minutes or so to bring Gary up to speed on what they’d gathered from the follow up newscasts.

“So, they’re still looking for one or more terrorist cells,” Gary concluded, “No wonder my gut hurts.”

“Gary, they’re looking in New York, for crying out loud,” Ron replied.

“Well, who says that the terrorists didn’t catch that news conference and move?” Gary asked. “By God, if I had half the ATF and FBI looking for me, I’d sure as hell move. Look, I think that I told you two that I suspected that Hambali had more than one cell in the US this time. Even I can be right once in a while.”

“But, Gary,” Clarence protested, “The government seized that container full of explosives. What are those terrorists going to do, steal more explosives?”

“Put yourself in their position, Clarence,” Gary retorted, “What would you do?”

“Oh. Steal more explosives I guess,” Clarence agreed. “But the way the ATF has been coming down on those explosives dealers and distributors, that sure wouldn’t be easy.”

“What’s easy got to do with it Clarence?” Gary asked. “Maybe I’m just being paranoid, but who ever said a little paranoia wasn’t a good thing.”

“In your case, partner, nobody would ever notice on your multi-axial assessment,” Ron chuckled.

I knew I forgot to mention something. Ron and Gary had started out that Alcohol and Drug Counseling class together. Ron had made it through the class where they’d

learned about multi-axial assessments before dropping out. Ron had a terrible time with the Pharmacology class and Gary had spent hours helping Ron learn all about drugs. Maybe that explained why Gary had a pretty good handle on drugs of various kinds. The best way to learn a subject was to teach it to someone else. (Absolutely true.)

And, while I'm digressing, I ought to point out that 13 days after Gar-Bear had been released from AV Hospital, his self-medicating had resolved the edema problem he'd come out of the hospital with. He'd done 5 days of Diazide followed by a week of the 80/12.5 Diovan and his feet were back to normal, the edema gone. And by the end of those same 2 weeks, our friend's had his blood sugar back to normal. (86) The only residual problem he'd had was a little low blood pressure, but every time he went into a hospital he always had that problem until he started cheating a little on his diet and eating a little too much salt. What's 'a little low'? Try 104/53 on for size. Drove the doctors' nuts! Made old Gar-Bear happy as hell, he'd suffered from hypertension for years.

Jakarta...

In this instance Gary was maybe right to be a little paranoid. Hambali had caught the live broadcast of the news conference on TNN. He was livid. Not only had he lost a cell, captured alive no less, but he'd lost that container of explosives. And, to make matters worse, the Americans were looking for his other cell in the right place. Maybe he'd underestimated the Americans. Or maybe he was just having a bad run of luck. Either way, he sent instructions to the cell in New York City to move to San Francisco. He also instructed that they locate replacement explosives. Something relating to the destruction of Hoover Dam was nagging at him, but he just couldn't put his finger on it. But, he was sure that it would come to him and whatever it was; he was positive that it would get the Americans attention big time. If he could just remember...

The Diablo Canyon plant is on a 750-acre site in San Luis Obispo County, California. The construction period for the 2 units may qualify as the longest in US history, with much of the 15 years devoted to studying its ability to withstand seismic activity. The cooling water for the reactors is obtained from the Pacific Ocean. Pacific Gas & Electric Company operates the Diablo Canyon plant. The owners include Edison International (75 percent), and San Diego Gas & Electric Co., Anaheim Public Utilities Department, and the Riverside Utilities Department.

April 9, 2003...

A refueling and maintenance shutdown of a reactor at the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant has been extended by problems that developed during the restart, Pacific Gas & Electric said.

Unit 2 was being brought back on line after a two-month shutdown when a feed water pump malfunctioned in the steam generating system last week. Then on Sunday a leak developed in a seal of an electricity generator, PG&E spokesman Bill Roake said.

“Everything that has happened has been in the non-nuclear side of the operation,” Roake said Wednesday.

“The reactor first went into operation in 1985. It has been out of operation since the refueling operation, planned to last about one month, began Feb. 3. Fixing the generating seal is expected to delay the restart to about April 17. The reactor is to be brought up in stages to full power by about April 21,” he said.

Earlier in the refueling shutdown an unexpected number of cracks and other defects were found in the unit’s heat exchangers that added to the time needed for repairs and testing. During return to full power the feed water pump problem developed as the unit was at 50 percent power on Friday.

The cause of the leaking generator seal on Sunday was not known, but plant operators’ suspect that rising pressure and temperatures contributed as the unit was being restarted, Roake said.

Diablo Canyon has two reactors capable of producing a total of 2,212 megawatts of power.

PG&E has said that after refueling each unit is designed to operate continuously for 19 months.

The Three Amigos Part III – The Three Amigos Ride Again – Chapter 54 – Meltdown 2

Present Day...(2009)...Jakarta...

The thing that Hambali was trying to remember was that when Hoover Dam had been blown, the grid had failed because Reactor #2 at San Onofre had to be shut down. And, remember that 6.5 earthquake that had hit Paso Robles on 12/22/2003 and killed 2 people? There had been quite the controversy when the Diablo Canyon reactor had been built. For one thing, it was awfully close to some earthquake faults. Now, if you take the original controversy, add in the information from that old newspaper article and consider some of the problems that were mentioned in that article, all you have to remember was the problem that San Onofre had when Hoover Dam went down to get the idea. And after a few days reflection, Hambali put it all together.

Hambali's cell had left New York and taken I-80 to San Francisco. Along the way, they'd detoured into the Denver area and managed to steal a fairly good-sized quantity of high order explosives. With that theft, the task force assumed rightly that the terrorists were on the move and shifted a substantial portion of their agents to the Colorado area to search for the terrorists. The problem was that by the time any sizeable force of agents arrived, the terrorists had made it to San Francisco. The quantity of explosives they'd stolen in Denver wasn't so large as to require that they rent a storage locker, either. A few days after they'd arrived in San Francisco, they received instructions from Hambali. He directed them to accomplish what amounted to a suicide mission. He directed that they attack the reactor at Diablo Canyon and try and cause a reactor meltdown like the one that had plagued Three-Mile Island years before.

In the interim since the attacks when Hambali's first cell had taken out the dams and blown the pipelines, DHS had greatly improved security around the US, but I've mentioned that before. Part of that improved security included increasing the civilian guard forces protecting the nuclear power plants around the US. And, under the new guidelines when the threat level went to orange, they really increased the security. However, the US was on a yellow threat level as I recall.

Palmdale...

Given the experience the contractor had constructing first Gary's home and later Ron and Clarence's he managed to complete the 4 new homes in less than 5 weeks. The kid's had all moved in and Gary was feeling a whole lot better. His gut was still nagging him, but at least if something did go down, his family would be safe. Kevin had tracked Ron and Linda down and when he'd showed up, Ron had headed for the shelter. Linda, to her credit, had given Kevin \$1,000 and his walking papers. She told him that if she never saw him again, it would be too soon. She probably didn't mean it, you know how mothers are, but she'd done it none the less. And, to his credit, Ron knew better than to bring the subject of Kevin up.

“Your gut still nagging at you Gar-Bear?” Ron asked.

“I’m afraid so, Ron,” Gary replied. “I sure wish I could put my finger on it.”

“I still say that we should have nuked Indonesia,” Ron followed up.

“Ronald, my friend, a nuclear weapon is a permanent solution to a temporary problem,” Gary replied. “Haven’t you ever watched the History Channel and seen what they did to Hiroshima and Nagasaki with those puny little atom bombs in 1945?”

“Well, Barbara Boxer did a pretty darned good job on the Middle East,” Ron retorted.

“You know what pal,” Gary said, “I sort of look at that as a fluke. Barbara Boxer happens to be Jewish, and I half suspect that in a moment of pique she succumbed to her dislike of the Arabs and went overboard. I don’t really think that our bombing the Middle East proved anything other than that the US can wipe out one or more nations if it has a desire to do so.”

“What’s this, going soft on me Gar-Bear?” Ron asked.

“Yeah, what’s with you?” Clarence added.

“To answer Ron’s question first, no, I am not going soft,” Gary said. “But think about it, what if we’re wrong and bomb the wrong target? It’s sort of like they taught me in law school. It’s better to let 100 guilty men go than execute one innocent man. And, while I’m on that subject, the flippin’ prisons in this country are so overcrowded that one of these days they’re going to explode. Hell, they can’t seem to build prisons fast enough. Now that they have those dang 3-strikes laws, the situation isn’t going to get any better either.”

Jakarta...

The CIA man had finally tracked down Hambali. He was a day late and a dollar short; Hambali had already sent his instructions to his cell in San Francisco. But, the agent didn’t know that. His instructions were pretty dang clear too. If he found Hambali, he was to terminate him with extreme prejudice, just like they said in the movies. This guy was efficient and he did just exactly what he’d been instructed to do, without a qualm. He’d put 2 rounds in Hambali’s head and then just for added insurance had emptied his clip into Hambali’s heart. Those little .22 rounds did just exactly what they were intended to do, too. He figured that the world was now a better place but maybe he should bury the body so that the US would have a leg up on the remainder of the world with the knowledge that Hambali was dead. Then, the man thought better of it. Indonesia’s wild-life includes several meat eating species, including Tigers, Crocodiles and the Komodo Dragons. Why bother with burying Hambali? He should have buried the body. Anyway, the last the agent saw of Hambali, a rather large croc was dragging the body under water.

Pleased with his accomplishment, the agent returned to the Embassy, prepared a communiqué outlining the entire affair and forwarded it to his immediate supervisor, the DO. When the DO received the communiqué, he immediately brought it to the attention of Director Goss who, in turn, brought it to the attention of President Rick Santorum. Santorum was ecstatic that Hambali had been eliminated, but he found himself in a quandary. The agent had disposed of the body and there was no way to prove that Hambali was, in fact, dead. After much consideration, Santorum decided that the Secretary of DHS, Prescott, should make a brief announcement that the Department had it on good authority that Hambali was dead and then stonewall.

Palmdale...

Ron, Gary and Clarence were still engaged in the conversation where we last left them.

"You know, Ron, your bringing up the subject of nukes makes me realize that I probably made my friend Fleataxi angry with me," Gary said.

"How's that partner?" Ron asked.

"Well, he had a typo in a story, I told you about that where he used died instead of dyed," Gary began. "Naturally the spell checked didn't pick it up and I pointed it out. Then, he apparently got in a hurry or something and made one of those mistakes that we all make from time to time and put 500 people in a C-130. Another Squirrel and I nit picked a little and the next thing you know, he's all over me making fun of my stories. You know how I am about stuff like that."

"He'll get over it," Ron said.

"I sure hope so," Gary replied, "Else I'll probably end up making a fool out of myself."

Remember Builders Emporium? They used to have an ad that said something like, "Got the message?"

Prescott made the announcement that Santorum wanted. Then, he stonewalled the hell out of the media with, "I don't have that information," and a half dozen other lies. One media representative, a fella by the name of Geraldo decided that this was his big chance to recover some of the glory that he'd lost over the years. He decided that he was going to do a big deal about Hambali's alleged demise and even travel to Indonesia and prove that Hambali was still alive.

The San Francisco cell hadn't signed on for a suicide mission. Thus they had been reticent to follow Hambali's instructions. But when Prescott made the announcement that DHS had it on good authority that Hambali was dead, they immediately sent a communication to Indonesia to contact Hambali. After two weeks they still hadn't heard back and they believed that in this case the Americans were telling the truth. The 4 men con-

cluded that they might as well proceed with the mission that Hambali had assigned as a tribute to his memory.

Prior to sending the 6 men to the US, Hambali had managed to get them some rudimentary training in nuclear reactors from a Pakistani nuclear engineer. They weren't overly knowledgeable, but they had enough training that they could expose a reactor's core and cause a meltdown, the so-called China syndrome that had almost occurred at Three-Mile Island and had at Chernobyl. Reactors are designed just to prevent such occurrences, but, they do happen and if one sets out intentionally to make it happen and has the skills, it really is possible. Frankly, I don't care how good the security is at any given place, either. Given the training, motivation and the element of surprise, anyone can penetrate a reactor or any other guarded facility, ask Richard Marcinco.

The target was the nuclear reactors at Diablo Canyon. The mission was to expose the cores of both reactors, forcing them into a meltdown. The probability of survival was zero and the probability of success was marginal, at best. It was late summer in 2009 and the terrorists were truly determined. By this time, the ATF and FBI, ergo the task force had run up against a brick wall. The US was making far better progress on the dam reconstruction projects than had ever been anticipated too. One has to remember when the dams were originally built and consider modern construction techniques to explain how the contractors had managed to be ahead of schedule. For example, when concrete cools, it produces heat that can lead to cracks in the concrete. Back when they build Hoover Dam, they'd run water lines to cool the concrete and prevent the cracks. But, that had been in the 1930's. Concrete still gave off heat, but the heat removal systems were greatly enhanced. The dams, which had been brought down on 9/17/07 were more than 1/2 way reconstructed. Not bad for only 2 years.

The Diablo Canyon Power Plant has extensive precautionary measures in place in the unlikely event of an emergency. If warranted, coordinated emergency plans for the plant, San Luis Obispo County, and state of California and the federal government would be activated immediately.

The federal government developed a classification system to help officials respond appropriately in emergency situations. PG&E and other officials use this system to respond as required by their emergency plans.

There are four classifications, beginning with an Unusual Event (UE). A UE is declared for any abnormal condition, including abnormal site conditions not directly related to safe operation of the plant. Plant operators would document the incident and notify selected PG&E managers, as well as local, state, and federal agencies. Personnel would also correct the abnormal condition, or continue to monitor the situation until it is corrected. If there were potential safety problems at the plant, an Alert, the next highest level of emergency, would be declared. At this level, emergency response personnel would assemble at emergency facilities to manage the emergency.

Should the situation escalate, it would be classified as a Site-Area-Emergency, or Gen-

eral Emergency, the most severe of the four emergency classifications.

Local residents and visitors would be notified of any emergency that required public response by Emergency Alert System bulletins and/or Early Warning System Sirens.

Diablo Canyon employs 1,200 full-time workers with an annual payroll of about \$100 million, making it one of the largest private employers on the Central Coast.

In case you're not already familiar with Diablo Canyon, let me just start by saying that the plant is built around two nuclear reactors which each produce 1,100 megawatts of electricity. All told, DCPD cranks out enough power for over two million homes! The plant sits on a gorgeous stretch of the Pacific coast just west of San Luis Obispo, California. Because the entire area is off limits to the public, it's a section of California's coast that most people will never see.

Quite an assignment, huh? Four Indonesians were up against a security force that was just part of a force of 1,200 employees. Guess that explains the probability of survival being zero and the probability of success being marginal, at best. By the way, where is Palmdale in relation to Diablo Canyon? 155 miles ESE as the crow flies, I'd guess. Say, what way does the wind blow in Palmdale? About 3:30 every afternoon, the wind seems to come up, blowing in 95% of the time from the west. But hells, bells, The Three Amigos live 8 miles ESE of Palmdale, and even if the reactor at Diablo Canyon were to meltdown and spread a bunch of radiation, they'd never get hit, right? But what are the odds of Florida getting hit by 4 back-to-back hurricanes named Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne? Never say never!

The 4 terrorists were faced with nearly insurmountable challenges. That pair of reactors employed a lot of people. That section of the California coast was inaccessible because of the nuclear power plant. There were people everywhere because of nearby state parks and beaches. And, they had set a deadline for themselves. The first cell, on 9/17/07, had taken down Hoover Dam and if they were able, they intended to bring down those reactors on the 2nd anniversary of the event. The Americans would probably end up making September 17th a holiday if they were successful. Hell, they might even end up making September the month of remembrance. The WTC had been brought down just 8 years and 4 days earlier. These were not stupid men, either. They had been educated in American Universities. A Pakistani nuclear engineer had schooled them and they'd received excellent training from their compatriots in Pakistan before the American President had destroyed the Middle East with her nuclear bombs. Oh, yes, the Americans would remember September 17th for a long time and it was a fitting tribute to their fallen leader Hambali.

The 4 men loaded their explosives into the trunk of the used car they'd purchased and drove down route 1 to San Luis Obispo. There, they checked into a Best Western Motel and began to study maps of the area. The reactor wasn't on any of the maps they'd purchased, but it shouldn't be too hard to find, after all the area was off limits, wasn't it? The Americans were so open, that they decided that they just ask around. It wouldn't

take long before some big mouth told them exactly what they needed to know. It really was just that simple. Oh, their questions wouldn't be direct, they just ask around about things like beaches and such. Sooner or later someone would warn them that a certain area of beach was off limits and they would have the reactor pinpointed.

Palmdale...

"So are we going to have a Labor Day picnic this year?" Clarence asked.

"That might be fun," Gary said, "What do you think partner?"

"Hey, I'm up for it," Ron agreed, "What are we going to have?"

"We're going to have to have chicken for sure," Gary replied, "You know Clarence, I thought that maybe we do burger and hot dogs, too."

"What, no steaks?" Ron asked.

"Well of course we'll have to do steaks, Ron," Gary agreed, "Sharon and you wouldn't be happy unless you had a steak. But I think I'll try to keep on my diet and just have a burger and if I'm still hungry, a dog. I gotta tell you, I haven't felt this good in years."

"Your gut still nagging you?" Ron asked.

"Yes. But, maybe I was wrong," Gary admitted. "Maybe there isn't a second or a third terrorist cell. Sure wouldn't be the first time that I was wrong about something and it probably won't be the last." (In case you don't have your 2009 calendar handy, Labor Day 2009 is 9/7/09.)

Gary was in a rather expansive mood. He'd seen a rerun on National Geographic Channel about super volcanoes and it brought to mind a story one of the Squirrel fiction writers had written. You had to keep your eyes open for material all of the time. The show had talked about Yellowstone erupting. Gary would have loved to use the idea, but it had already been done and probably better than anything he could have come up with. And like Gary had said, maybe he was wrong. Or, was Gary wrong about his being wrong?

The Three Amigos Part III – The Three Amigos Ride Again – Chapter 55 – The Hot Wind

When you think about it, Gary was wrong, either way. Hopefully he had managed to bury the hatchet with his friend Fleataxi too. Anyway everyone started to plan for the big Labor Day Picnic. There were only the 7 families on the 2½ acres, but, by the time you counted the kids and the grand kids, you had a nice crowd. John, Linda's son, was living in a nice bedroom that Ron and Linda had put up in their basement. Probably forgot to mention that, too. Memory problems, you know. Each of The Three Amigos had a different setup in his basement. Already told you about Gary's. Clarence had himself a pool table and a TV plus a desk for the computer he had hooked into the network. Even had a bar, but the only thing it dispensed was those premixed fountain sodas. Man, you could go to Clarence's, play a game or two of pool, naturally Clarence was quite the hustler, have just about any one of a dozen favors of soda, pop or whatever you call it and hell, Clarence even let you smoke in his basement.

Ron and Linda had put in two bedrooms. John had one and Gary suspected that the other was for Kevin. Ron and Linda really had used the rest of the basement as a family room and Ron had his collection of 600+ VCR cassettes and 300+ DVD's plus that big screen TV. Ronald had even bought a popcorn popper from Smart and Final Iris and if you caught him in a good mood, you might get to watch a movie and have a tub of popcorn. Sure was a shame that Ron hadn't put in a soda bar like Clarence's, but he had a refrigerator full of sodas and that was the next best thing. Ron just loved his iced tea and he had himself one of those glass barrel things that he kept full of pre-sweetened ice tea. That would have been ok with Gary, but old Gar-Bear just hated Sweet and Low. Of course, there'd been that period there where Hollywood had shut down and no movies had been made, but Ron bought just about every DVD that hit the market. Gary was surprised that his amigo didn't have a thousand of the things.

San Luis Obispo...

It had been easy enough for the terrorists to get the information they needed to locate Diablo Canyon. It might have taken them as long as an hour. But, PG&E was doing a pretty good job maintaining security on the location and they had one devil of a time getting in. They'd finally found a spot where the fence didn't quite reach to the ground and had slithered under barely ahead of a PG&E patrol. Once inside, they located the two reactor domes and started to accumulate the information they'd need to successfully assault the control room. It took them about 3 days to find a weak spot in PG&E's security and it wouldn't have been evident to someone who wasn't already inside.

PG&E's internal auditor's had spotted the security problem themselves, but so far a solution had eluded them. It didn't seem to present much of a problem, though, and the security was so darned tight that no one would be able to get into the place and exploit the problem, or, so they assumed. Aren't that how most problems start? Someone makes an assumption and pretty soon he's made an ass out of u and me? (ass/u/me) After 4 days of scouting the terrorists were pretty much ready. All they needed to do

was get those 100 kilos of explosives in and they were good to go. 100 kilos of explosives was more than they needed according to that Pakistani engineer, but why take a chance? It was only 25 kilos apiece and the timers and detonators didn't really weigh much at all. They worked their way out the same way they came in and returned to the Best Western. The date was September 6, 2009. The Indonesians really didn't understand the Labor Day holiday at all. Even though all four of the men had attended college in the US, they didn't get it.

"Labor Day differs in every essential way from the other holidays of the year in any country," said Samuel Gompers, founder and longtime president of the American Federation of Labor. "All other holidays are in a more or less degree connected with conflicts and battles of man's prowess over man, of strife and discord for greed and power, of glories achieved by one nation over another. Labor Day...is devoted to no man, living or dead, to no sect, race, or nation."

"Labor Day, the first Monday in September, is a creation of the labor movement and is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of American workers. It constitutes a yearly national tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity, and well-being of our country." (Now, maybe you see what I mean and you should have a pretty good idea how handy I am with a search engine. You don't actually believe that I know all of this stuff do you?)

The terrorists figured what the heck and participated in the holiday festivities in San Luis Obispo anyway. It was a good way to get some free food. They happened upon a PG&E company picnic and went around shaking hands and getting acquainted. They sort of figured that it might give them a slight edge if some of the employees recognized them when they hit the place. Might assume that they were employees or something and a terrorist needed every edge he could get. Besides, there were only 4 of them and from the size of the crowd at that picnic; it seemed that the mission was impossible.

Palmdale...

The Three Amigos had rolled out early that day so they could get the beer (for the others), sodas, watermelon and such iced down and ready for the picnic. They had everyone's gas grills and lined them up ready to cook. The chicken, steaks and hamburgers were thawing and the hot dogs were ready to go. The women had made a bunch of salads and they were looking forward to a leisurely afternoon. Then, up popped the Devil in the form of one John Jones, Lieutenant, LA County Sheriff's Department. Johnny had them going for a minute, too, but it turned out that he'd only stopped by to visit and have a cool one. They ended up talking about the government's search for the second terrorist cell. It turned out that there was one hell of a lot more going on than they had suspected. It seems, according to Johnny, that the FBI had managed to track the terrorists to San Francisco but had hit a brick wall when they'd done so.

"So, there was a terrorist cell after all," Gary was thinking as Johnny filled them in. Somehow Gary didn't find any comfort in that, his gut was really nagging him. Gary sort

of lost interest in the conversation as Johnny went on talking to Ron and Clarence and he began to wonder what that bunch of terrorists was up to. The first thought to enter his mind was that they were going to blow up the Golden Gate Bridge, but he dismissed that when he remembered that they'd only stolen about 200 kilos of explosives, according to TNN. He worked his way up the coast and down the coast, but couldn't think of a single worthwhile target. Well, there was that reactor over at Diablo Canyon, he thought, but he quickly dismissed that because PG&E ran a pretty tight ship. He had gone over to a state beach at one time and had strayed pretty close to those reactors and had gotten run off by some guards in a pickup. He kept working his way down the coast and simply couldn't find a likely target.

"Gary, where are you, partner?" Ron hollered at him.

"Huh? Oh sorry fellas, I was just trying to figure out where those terrorists might strike next," Gary admitted. "Where's Johnny?"

"Johnny left about 30 minutes ago, Gary," Clarence replied. "What did you come up with targets?"

"I ran all the way up and down the California coast," Gary explained. "The only thing that occurred to me was the reactors at Diablo Canyon, but I was over that way one time with Kathy to go to the beach and we ended up getting run off by some PG&E guards in a pickup. If their security was that tight in '97, imagine what it must be like now. Besides, if I remember right from some research I did for one of my stories, the Diablo Canyon facility employs over 1,000 people. If I was worried about Diablo Canyon, it would be from an earthquake, not a bunch of terrorists."

"Did you ever read *Rogue Warrior*?" Ron asked.

"Yeah, that's that Dick Marcinco, Ron," Gary said. "That man is as full of crap as a Christmas goose. Couldn't stand his stuff. He must have to carry his arm in a sling from patting himself on the back."

"All of that stuff was true," Ron insisted.

"Yeah right," Gary said, "Anyway I take it that you are trying to point out that a small team of highly skilled operators could break into a place like Diablo Canyon. Who knows, maybe Marcinco and his people could have; I seem to recall him claiming that no one could keep them out. But hell man, we're talking about a bunch of Indonesian terrorists here, not a highly trained US SEAL Team."

"Gary, it was a bunch of Indonesian terrorists that took out Hoover Dam," Clarence pointed out, "And the same bunch took out those pipelines."

"That was different, Clarence," Gary insisted, "They had lots of time to plan and none of those targets was guarded like Diablo Canyon. Besides, they're dead."

“But you do agree that there is another terrorist team in the US, right?” Ron asked.

“Seems like Johnny made that abundantly clear,” Gary responded. “Yeah, there’s another terrorist team in the US. My gut tells me that even without Johnny’s info.”

“Gary, supposing, just supposing,” Clarence said, “That those terrorists did somehow manage to get into Diablo Canyon. What would happen?”

“Well, since we’re just supposing,” Gary said, “They probably would try to damage one of the reactors cooling systems and expose the core. It would be like that movie with Michael Douglas, Jack Lemmon and old Hanoi Jane. You remember, *The China Syndrome*. We’ve had two pretty close calls with a meltdown, Three-Mile Island and Chernobyl.”

“And what mister know it all,” Ron asked, “Were those two accidents all about?”

“I think that Three-Mile Island was caused by a stuck valve and the control room operators made an error or two in judgment,” Gary said. “I know that Chernobyl was caused by an experiment the Russians were conducting where they shut the safety systems down.”

The problems did not start with the feed water pumps, trouble began in the condensate polisher system. The NRC reported this in 1979 but states that they don’t need to know the exact cause of the condensate polisher valves failure. No one knows why the accident began to this day.

Because TMI had been falsifying reactor leak rates to the NRC in the weeks leading to the accident, operators had learned to ignore the most obvious sign that the PORV had stuck open and that coolant was being lost through this pathway. The high temperature reading at the PORV drain line was a clear indication that coolant was escaping. But, operators had become accustomed to this anomaly because of the criminal falsification which allowed this condition to exist for several weeks.

It is also noteworthy that NRC inspectors at TMI during the weeks before the accident failed to find or note the reactor coolant leak. Later, the company pleaded ‘no contest’ to federal charges of criminal falsifications.

On May 22 1979, former control room operator Harold W. Hartman, Jr. tells the NRC investigators that Metropolitan Edison-General Public Utilities had been falsifying primary-coolant, leak rate data for months prior to the accident. At least two members of management were aware of the practice. NRC investigators do not follow-up or report the allegations to the commission.

“On February 29, 1984, a plea bargain between the Department of Justice and Met Ed settled the Unit 2 leak rate falsification case. Met Ed pleaded guilty to one count, and no

contest to six counts of an 11 count indictment.

It was only by luck that the reactor walls were not breached. The industry conjectured that voids in the coolant prevented molten fuel from burning through the reactor walls. It is not known if these voids will form to prevent a total meltdown in future accidents. Fifteen million curies of radiation is a 'massive quantity'.

Reactor core measurements taken during the first morning showed that fuel might have melted. This data was cast aside because operators believed it was not possible and therefore erroneous. During the first day, the NRC in fact distanced itself from the company by stating it did not tell them how to run their plant and that they were overseers of regulatory matters. Initially, the NRC was more interested in hiding from responsibility than offering advice to the company.

By mid-morning, citizens (many who had not heard about the accident) were reporting a metallic taste in their mouths. Because the reactor had been leaking for several weeks, the reactor drain tank was full and a pathway to the environs had already been created by valves aligned to handle the leaking coolant and facilitate the falsification of the leak rates. Additionally, at the time of the accident, GPU reported that radiation monitors went off-scale, filters were clogged and other monitoring devices 'disappeared.' Therefore, we do not know how much radiation escaped undetected into the atmosphere.

"Before you ask, I was doing some research for a new story," Gary explained. "That's the only reason I know that stuff. I also researched the Chernobyl accident."

The accident in reactor no. 4 at the Chernobyl nuclear power station took place in the night of 25 to 26 April 1986, during a test. The operating crew planned to test whether the turbines could produce sufficient energy to keep the coolant pumps running in the event of a loss of power until the emergency diesel generator was activated.

In order to prevent the test run of the reactor being interrupted, the safety systems were deliberately switched off. For the test, the reactor had to be powered down to 25 per cent of its capacity. This procedure did not go according to plan: for unknown reasons, the reactor power level fell to less than 1 per cent. The power therefore had to be slowly increased. But 30 seconds after the start of the test, there was a sudden and unexpected power surge. The reactor's emergency shutdown (which should have halted the chain reaction) failed.

Within fractions of a second, the power level and temperature rose many times over. The reactor went out of control. There was a violent explosion. The 1000-ton sealing cap on the reactor building was blown off. At temperatures of over 2000°C, the fuel rods melted. The graphite covering of the reactor then ignited. In the ensuing inferno, the radioactive fission products released during the core meltdown were sucked up into the atmosphere.

"Did you know that Sweden was the first country to detect the problem at Chernobyl?"

Gary asked.

“All right,” Ron said, “So you’ve done some research. Did that research happen to include what would happen if Diablo Canyon had an accident or was hit by terrorists?”

“Nope,” Gary replied.

“Don’t you think you should?” Ron continued.

“Alright already. I’m working on something right now,” Gary replied, “I’ll have time around the first of next month to check it out for you.” (Famous last words? How about never do today what you can put off until tomorrow?)

The Three Amigos Part III – The Three Amigos Ride Again – Chapter 56 – The Hot Wind 2

Just sitting around killing time was driving the terrorist nuts. It was also attracting some attention after a few days because whenever the maid went to make up the room, the 4 guys were there. She complained to her supervisor and the supervisor complained to the Motel Manager. The Motel Manager said that he'd keep an eye on the situation and if this kept up, he'd consider bringing the police into the matter. But, the Manager got busy and it slipped his mind. The maid was about to complain again, but on September 16th, the 4 guys checked out. When the 4 men presented themselves at the front desk to settle their account, the Manager suddenly remember about the earlier complaint. However, since the 4 guys were leaving, he considered the matter closed and it ended right then and there.

Later that evening, the 4 men slipped under the fence again and positioned themselves for their assault. The security problem mentioned earlier had to do with how the facility handled security shift changes. For a brief period, about 15 minutes, there was no security while the new guards were brought up to speed by the departing guards. It was at this moment that the 4 Indonesians struck. Two of the men gained access to the control room using the universal key, an AK-47. The other two men each entered one of the reactors the same way. The terrorists in the reactors quickly placed their charges of 50 kilos of Semtex while the other men killed the Control room staff. The time was 11pm. The reactors were already operating at full capacity so the only thing the two men in the control room had to do was keep people out of the control room. The men in the reactors left to join the men in the control room and await the explosions signaling the disruption of coolant flow to the reactors.

The guards hadn't heard anything because the AK-47's were suppressed. A few minutes before the new guards were to begin their tours, the explosives detonated. All hell broke loose. Guards called a UE and scrambled to the reactors and control room. They assessed the damage to the cooling system and determined that the backup system should be able to handle the problem. They also raised the status to an alert. When they tried to gain access to the control room and were rebuffed by gunfire, they skipped the Site-Area-Emergency and went directly to General Emergency.

Immediately, local residents and visitors were notified of the emergency that required public response by Emergency Alert System bulletins. The DOE was also notified as required by law and another call went out to the CHP. The final call went to Sacramento, to the Governor. This was the same Governor who had messed up on the LA Riots. He had learned quite a bit from that experience and HE called the DHS to ask for guidance. The call might have been a surprise, but DHS was already aware of the problem due to PG&E's notification to the DOE. The time was now shortly after midnight and the date was 9/17/09. Not only that, but every siren within 20 miles of Diablo Canyon was going off.

The reactors were slowly losing their coolant. The problem I have describing the event

is that I'm not exactly sure where the terrorists placed those bombs. Probably right where that Pakistani engineer told them to, wherever that was. Sorry. Anyway, unlike the movie *The China Syndrome* the PG&E engineers didn't have some quick Hollywood alternative. They had determined that at the rate the two reactors were losing coolant, they would be unable to bypass the necessary wiring. All they really needed to do was to access the control room and activate the emergency cooling system, but that was out of the question because the control room was under the control of what they now took to be terrorists.

In most of Gary stories, he had some catchy name for his settlements like The Ark or the Res. After Ron and Clarence had moved into their new homes, The Three Amigos visited about that very thing. It got to be quite a discussion. And The Three Amigos couldn't agree on what to call the place. Finally Clarence had settled the matter when he said, "I don't know about you fellas, but I'm just going to call it home." From that time on, that's exactly what they did, they just talked about home.

Gary was up late for a change watching a rerun on TV. He got bored, it turned out he'd seen the movie before, and started to channel check. He hit channel 2, KCBS, just in the middle of the EBS signal. He assumed it was a test and moved to channel 4, KNBC and still got the EBS signal. He wondered what in the hell could be so important that they were running the EBS signal at 12:45am. So, he left the TV on channel 4 and decided to find out. Paul Moyer came on after moment or two, still adjusting his tie. Gary didn't particularly like Paul Moyer, the man was positively anti-gun, but curiosity was getting the better of him so he hung in for a minute. Moyer was saying something about an incident at Diablo Canyon. Gary changed to channel 2 to find out what was really going on.

...at Diablo Canyon Nuclear reactors around midnight. PG&E officials have stated that as the cores of the reactors are exposed, the cores will begin to melt down. At this time, KCBS has very little other information. To repeat, at 11:55pm, explosions in reactors 1 and 2 at Diablo Canyon Nuclear power plant disabled the cooling systems causing the reactors to begin losing coolant. PG&E officials have stated that as the cores...

Man talking about being wrong. Gary picked up the phone and dialed Ron. When Linda answered, he said, "We have a problem, put on channel 2." Gary repeated the calls until Clarence plus Gary's four kids had the word. He then went back in the bedroom and woke up Sharon and told her that some terrorists had blown up the reactors at Diablo Canyon and that they'd better think about getting to the shelter. She asked if she had to do it right away and he asked her to make a pot of coffee first, please, and come back and watch TV with him. Gary rarely did anything in moderation. He'd really blown it this time, but he did what he had to do. You have to give Gary credit, in a way.

Gar-Bear did a quick 2-4-7 channel check, CBS-NBC-ABC. Moyer was ranting about the terrorists having guns and ABC was about the same as CBS so he went back to channel 2. They had picked a live news conference with a PG&E official and the way those reporters were screaming at the guy, you'd have thought he had personally blown

up the reactors and started the meltdown.

“Thanks for the coffee, honey,” Gary said. “I suppose that we’d better grab those bags of clothes and get to the shelter. We can monitor the situation from there.”

Apparently, Sharon had a migraine or something and if looks could have killed... They rounded up the pets, got the coffee and headed for the shelter. By the time they got there, it was starting to fill. Gary remembered his weapons and ALICE gear and went back upstairs and got them. The shelter, though much larger than the first, was set up for The Three Amigos. There was, however, ample space and cots in the storeroom. Ron had even gotten the coffee maker going. They already pulled some cots out, set them up and had the little kids settled down and back to sleep.

“Man,” Gary said, “I sure blew it this time.”

“We tried to tell you,” Ron said and dropped the subject.

They started following the news on FOX, which by this time was taking feeds from its own affiliates and a couple of other channels. A SWAT team had finally managed to blow the control room door, PG&E had secured that room pretty good, and the 4 terrorists were dead. But, before they’d been killed, the terrorists had pretty much destroyed the control room. And the cores were now almost exposed and about ready to begin melting down. About all that could be done was to remove the reactors from the grid and try something, anything, to slow/stop down that meltdown. About that time, the last charges planted by the terrorists blew, cracking open the containment buildings and allowing the radiation into the atmosphere.

At Chernobyl, the Russians had resorted to burying reactor #4 under tons of concrete and killed a bunch of very brave people in the process. American reactors were constructed far differently than their Russian counterparts and the terrorists hadn’t blown the dome off the containment buildings, they’d just cracked them. That Pakistani engineer must have been one smart dude. Then, FOX put up a graphic and showed the probable dispersion pattern of the leaking radiation. The wind was out of the WNW and Lancaster and Palmdale were right in the path. Ron got on one line and gave the Citadel a heads up while Gary got on the other line to the Sheriff’s Department. Next, they called over to Moon Shadows and gave Randy a heads up.

Out of the blue, Clarence observed, “Well at least that Hambali is dead, so maybe this is the last of it.”

Damon and Derek went out and started to lock up the blast doors to keep the radiation out when it arrived. The winds weren’t particularly high, so The Three Amigos figured that they had plenty of time. As they continued to watch the coverage on TV, PG&E had allowed the media into Diablo Canyon and they were now getting live feeds from the reactors. The feeds, of course, were from cameras on tripods, and they didn’t have to listen to any stupid reporters speculating about this, that or the other thing. Gary was

wondering if maybe Geraldo was available to do a live commentary. Pity, even Geraldo wasn't quite that dumb.

As they watched, two trucks came into the picture, driven by men all dressed up in those radiation suits. The drivers and passengers got out and began to run large hoses into the two containment buildings. What the hell? It didn't take long to get an answer to that question; truckload after truckload of Ready-mixed concrete appeared on the scene. Of course, those trucks had brought in concrete pumps and it looked like they were going to try to pump those reactor vessels full of concrete, just like the Russians had done at Chernobyl. It was strange sitting there watching a disaster unfold right before their eyes.

Gary had done several things differently when he'd built his home and shelter. For one thing, he'd picked up several recalibrated CD radiation detectors. He'd mounted the sensor probes to a high range and a low range counter on the outside of the house and had run lines down to the shelter, giving them access to the outside radiation levels. He also had some of the portable units. He also mounted all of his radio antennas on a single mast and had preset a scanner for the local Sheriff's Department frequencies. For years, Gary had driven down Balboa Street on the way to the doctors' offices.

Some of you may actually remember Balboa Street and not know it. Remember the Northridge Earthquake back in 1994? Remember the street that had caved in breaking a bunch of gas lines that had ended up burning down 5 homes when the gas lines caught on fire? It was all over TV for a while. That was Balboa Street. About a mile north of that cave in was a fire station. The fire station had a radio antenna mast that was a long, slender tapered pole that reached halfway to the moon, or so it seemed to Gary. Anyway, he'd tracked down the company who manufactured that antenna mast and had one just like it put in when he'd built the home, or shortly thereafter. (US Towers Monopole)

With solar panels on the 7 homes and garage feeding an even larger battery bank they could go quite a while before the generator kicked in, if it did at all. And, being the preparedness freak that he was, Gary had put wheels on that relay rack that held all of his computer equipment in the basement. Essentially the only connections to/from the rack were that T-1 line, a set of network cables and a power cord. The rack had a true UPS, some fairly powerful cooling fans, the router/firewall, the 24 port switch and his old computer (the server) remounted in a 3U server case. His Dell desktop computer was on his desk. When Damon and Derek had started to shut the shelter up, they'd gotten an appliance cart, shut down the server and computer and carefully lowered that portable relay rack to the shelter. Gary had connected the power, hooked in the T-1 in his COMM shack and rebooted first the server and then the computer. Although there was also a set of connections to the computers on the network in the COMM shack, Gary didn't bother to reconnect those. Everyone was in the shelter anyway.

Gary was monitoring the Sheriff's radio band. The Governor, to his credit, had immediately ordered a massive evacuation in path of the expected radiation from the Diablo

Canyon Reactors. Even in the best of times evacuations are complicated affairs that take a while and they didn't really have a whole lot of time. San Luis Obispo had an evacuation plan and they put it into play. They started sending their residents north on the 101 since the wind was out of the WNW. The city of Los Angeles sent its entire fleet of busses up the 101 to help with the evacuations. The stretch of coast from San Luis Obispo to LA is heavily populated and is primarily served by the 101 freeway. Again, even in the best of times, that particular freeway is a difficult drive. There were more people than there were cars, busses and military trucks and some of the people ended up taking shelter in community buildings. To the credit of the CHP, wreckers were stationed along the 101 clearing wrecks as fast as they happened. The traffic was moving at a dismal 25mph, but at least it was moving. All of the wrecks were of the fender bender variety; none of the vehicles could go fast enough to cause a serious crash.

By the time that the bombs cracked open the containment buildings the evacuation was well under way. Old Gar-Bear had an old 17" b & w TV in the COMM shack and was busy as can be, monitoring the radio, watching TV and trying to follow the events. He was feeling pretty guilty about that time for his error in judgment and was doing his best to make up for it. That little COMM shack was the heart of the shelter. Everything was computerized and Gary could control just about everything with that computer of his. Ain't technology grand? But what with the adrenalin surge, the lack of sleep and so forth, Gary's blood sugar started to run on empty. Gary noticed his left hand trembling, immediately recognized it as a warning sign that his blood sugar level was hovering around 50 (LOW) and called Derek to take over the COMM shack. The ladies had thrown together a nice little breakfast and he had some orange juice as a quick fix and added some protein. Now all he needed was 30 minutes for everything to get into his system and he was good to go.

Of course Gary was tired and he was starting to do things backwards. He should have taken time to check his BP/BS, taken his insulin and meds and then had breakfast, but what can I say? Anyway, by the time he did his morning medical routines, his BS was a healthy 75 (the orange juice) and he was feeling a whole lot better. He checked on Derek and Derek was doing just fine so he went out and flopped down in an easy chair in front of the TV. Five minutes later, he was sound asleep.

The Three Amigos Part III – The Three Amigos Ride Again – Chapter 57 – Buzz, Buzz, Buzz

Another thing Gar-Bear had done was to install some remote controlled locks on the blast doors. They were activated by flipping a switch in the COMM shack and prevented the blast doors from being opened until the switch was switched off. Hooked into the circuit was a 15 second timer and it, in turn, was connected to one of those old fashioned buzzers he'd picked up at Radio Shack. The buzzer only ran for the 15 seconds and its purpose was to notify everyone in the shelter that the blast doors had been secured. The protocol that Gary had developed was that at the first sign of radiation, among other things, the doors were to be secured. The low-level radiation counter had started to tick and Derek had flipped the switch.

Buzz-buzz-buzz. The buzzer startled Gary awake. He had been in a deep sleep, probably dreaming about Stacy/Barbara, and that buzzer was pretty dang loud. He awakened totally disoriented and it took him a minute or two to realize what was happening. He looked around, realized that he was sitting in an easy chair in front of the TV and then remembered sitting down after he'd eaten breakfast. It took him a few moments longer to realize what had awakened him. He bolted out of the chair and headed for the COMM shack. Derek was sitting there monitoring everything and Gary took a peek at the radiation meters.

The high level (500R) meter's needle wasn't moving, but the 50 mR unit was ticking away. Gary looked at the wall clock and realized that he'd been sleeping for a pretty long time. It appeared that the radiation levels were still pretty low so Gary slipped out of the COMM shack and went to do his meds. When he'd finished, he'd gotten a bite to eat and then returned to the COMM shack to relieve Derek. In that short, 30-minute interval, the low level meter had maxed out and Derek had turned it off. Now, the needle was starting to register on the high level, 500 R, unit. The needle on a third unit, another of the 50 mR devices that measured the radiation inside the shelter wasn't moving.

Gary relived Derek and resumed the watch. Per protocol, Derek had been maintaining extensive notes and Gary scanned them to get up to speed. They'd managed, somehow to clear out Lancaster and Rosamond and took those people north to the San Joaquin Valley. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Palmdale residents had also been evacuated and the remainder were at the Citadel. Along 101, things hadn't gone nearly as well and the radiation had caught up with the evacuees before everyone had gotten clear. Derek hadn't noted anything about possible deaths, so Gary had no idea what the situation was. Derek had the TV on FOX and according to FOX, the radiation had reached all the way to Victorville, as of this time. Apparently while he'd been sleeping, they'd managed to pump those reactor vessels full of concrete and the reactors were no longer leaking radiation. There was no radio traffic on the scanner, and Gary assumed that meant that the Sheriff's Department was safely tucked away in the Citadel. By this time, the outside radiation level was running about 250 R/hr.

"Have a nice nap?" Ron asked sticking his head into the comm. shack.

“Hey, Ron,” Gary said. “Must have been more tired than I thought.”

“Did you do your meds and eat?” Ron asked.

“Right after I woke up, thanks,” Gary replied.

“Still feeling guilty?” Ron asked.

“No. A little silly maybe, but I guess I’m over the guilt,” Gary admitted. “How did you know?”

“I’m your sponsor lunkhead,” Ron replied, “I know you better than you know yourself.”

“If you’re so flippin’ smart, what was I dreaming about?” Gary chuckled.

“Probably about that redhead that Sharon and I hired to wake you up,” Ron laughed.

“Oh,” Gary said. “So what’s the situation?”

“They got those two reactors pumped full of concrete finally,” Ron said, “But those two guys that took the hoses in got a fatal dose. They managed to get about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the people evacuated before the radiation caught up to them, too.”

“Any word on the number of deaths?” Gary asked.

“No, but it has to be pretty substantial, the radiation level hit 1,000R/hr for a while,” Ron replied.

“Anything else that I should know about?” Gary asked.

“Well...” Ron began. “The prison up in Tehachapi was right in the path so they attempted to move those inmates to another prison. Anyway, something went wrong and the prisoners managed to bust loose. Word got out somehow and another couple of prisons started to riot. Before anyone could react, they managed to break out too.”

“How could something like that happen, partner?” Gary asked.

“Hell, I don’t know,” Ron said, “Don’t I remember you saying something about prison overcrowding and the like?”

“Maybe, I can’t remember,” Gary admitted. “How many people are we talking about here?”

“Several thousand,” Ron replied. “Santorum activated the Guards in a few states and they’re flooding into California as fast as possible. But with the radiation and everything,

it's going to be a while before they get those cons rounded up. Before the radiation had a chance to go up, we managed to get all of the shutters closed, so the houses are secure."

"I have this CCTV monitor, so I can keep a watch on the outside," Gary remarked.

"Is that the gizmo you mounted on the antenna mast?" Ron asked.

"Yeah, it has a 360 degree view of the entire 2½ acres and a zoom lens so I can see a ways beyond," Gary said, "I guess I forgot to mention that."

"Say partner, you keep using the term EBS when you refer to the radio and TV," Ron said. "You really ought to pay more attention. They haven't called it the EBS in maybe 5 years. Seems to me they renamed it the Emergency Alert System or EAS."

"Really? I must have missed TV that day," Gary laughed. "Ok from now on, I'll use the term EAS. You know how much I hate being wrong about things." (thanks partner)

The garage was more or less secure too. Gary had a touch of the obsessive-compulsive in him and had special doors manufactured for the garage. They were only ½ inch steel plate and it took a 2hp motor to raise and lower them, but the average guy would play hell even getting into the garage. Unless he had a Stanley garage door opener set to the right frequency, that is. And those 6 doors were the only way into the garage.

Slowly, the Survey meter crept up to 350R/hr and then leveled off. It remained there for about a day and then slowly started to fall. Apparently, the wind was blowing the radiation away and that was falling on the ground and was beginning to decay. Gary had it in mind that they weren't going anywhere until the R level was 0.1R/hr or lower. Here's why:

30 to 70 R From 6-12 hours: none to slight incidence of transient headache and nausea; vomiting in up to 5 percent of personnel in upper part of dose range. Mild lymphocyte depression within 24 hours. Full recovery expected. (Fetus damage possible from 50R and above.)

70 to 150 R From 2-20 hours: transient mild nausea and vomiting in 5 to 30 percent of personnel. Potential for delayed traumatic and surgical wound healing, minimal clinical effect. Moderate drop in lymphocyte, platelet, and granulocyte counts. Increased susceptibility to opportunistic pathogens. Full recovery expected.

150 to 300 R From 2 hours to three days: transient to moderate nausea and vomiting in 20 to 70 percent; mild to moderate fatigability and weakness in 25 to 60 percent of personnel. At 3 to 5 weeks: medical care required for 10 to 50%. At high end of range, death may occur to maximum 10%. Anticipated medical problems include infection, bleeding, and fever. Wounding or burns will geometrically increase morbidity and mortality.

300 to 530 R From 2 hours to three days: transient to moderate nausea and vomiting in 50 to 90 percent; mild to moderate fatigability in 50 to 90 percent of personnel. At 2 to 5 weeks: medical care required for 10 to 80%. At low end of range, less than 10% deaths; at high end, death may occur for more than 50%. Anticipated medical problems include frequent diarrheal stools, anorexia, increased fluid loss, ulceration. Increased infection susceptibility during immunocompromised time-frame. Moderate to severe loss of lymphocytes. Hair loss after 14 days.

530 to 830 R From 2 hours to two days: moderate to severe nausea and vomiting in 80 to 100 percent of personnel; From 2 hours to six weeks: moderate to severe fatigability and weakness in 90 to 100 percent of personnel. At 10 days to 5 weeks: medical care required for 50 to 100%. At low end of range, death may occur for more than 50% at six weeks. At high end, death may occur for 99% of personnel. Anticipated medical problems include developing pathogenic and opportunistic infections, bleeding, fever, loss of appetite, GI ulcerations, bloody diarrhea, severe fluid and electrolyte shifts, capillary leak, hypotension. Combined with any significant physical trauma, survival rates will approach zero.

830 R Plus From 30 minutes to 2 days: severe nausea, vomiting, fatigability, weakness, dizziness, and disorientation; moderate to severe fluid imbalance and headache. Bone marrow total depletion within days. CNS symptoms are predominant at higher radiation levels. Few, if any, survivors even with aggressive and immediate medical attention.

They might be safe enough at 30 R, by why take the chance? It would probably only require them to stay in the shelter for an extra day and once they did go out; they shouldn't have to worry about much. It should also give you an idea what those folks who were stuck on the 101 freeway were up against. Back when the Arab terrorists had detonated all of those dirty bombs and suitcase nuke, Gary's system wasn't nearly as sophisticated as it was now, explaining why he had insisted that everyone follow the rule of 7's.

The death toll from this latest terrorist attack wouldn't begin to rise to the level of 11/12/05, but it would make the WTC pale by comparison. Of course we all know that things like this can't happen in the good old US of A, so why bother getting prepared; just in case? On the other hand, what would have happened if they hadn't gotten a handle on the reactor at Three-Mile Island? Kind of makes you wonder, doesn't it? And potassium iodide? Buy some of it or the stuff frugal has available. That will sure keep you safe. Not hardly, but on the other hand, it's still a darned good idea to have some on hand. Everything you can do to protect yourself and your family is a good idea. It is really amazing that the ostrich isn't extinct.

Editorial Comment: I don't happen to be anti-nuclear power. I really think it's a good idea because it beats the heck out of using fossil fuels. But as with all things, nuclear power has its dangers. Say, what if they got it wrong and those reactors at Diablo Canyon got hit by an earthquake? Would all of those automatic safety systems really work

and shut the reactors down? Oh, that's right, the state of California studied the situation and says it can't happen. The equipment worked pretty well at Three-Mile Island but the operators ignored those instruments, didn't they? And one guy even showed some initiative and only made it worse. I happen to believe, albeit wrongly, that the thing that saved Three-Mile Island was President Carter, a Nuclear Engineer by training, showing up and setting them straight. In my book, that took a set of big ones. I may not have cared for Carter as President, but in my book, he's one hell of a man.

When finally, a few days later, the outside radiation level reached 0.1R/hr, Gary flipped the switch and unlocked the shelter doors. Everyone gathered up their things and headed home via the tunnel system. As a measure of added insurance, Gary sent along some survey meters and told everyone to check for hot spots. There weren't any. The Citadel had opened their doors when the radiation level had reached 0.2R/hr. By this time, the Guard troops from California and the other states were busy trying to deal with those poor folks on the 101 freeway and looking for the escaped cons. As in the case with reactor no. 4 at Chernobyl, Diablo Canyon was a total loss.

The way their luck seemed to run, The Three Amigos figured that they would probably end up being attacked by a bunch of cons and they kept their weapons close at hand. Fortunately, that didn't happen in this case, was their luck beginning to change? Not really, no. Those 11 gang bangers that they'd had to deal with hadn't particularly been headed their way until they'd had that blowout. And then they just became what a lot of bad people became in similar circumstances, opportunists, looking for the easy way out. And then, just when they began to relax their guard a little three rather scruffy fellas showed up wearing jeans and blue work shirts. Ron was off getting a 'haircut' at the stylists but Gary recognized the clothes. Gar-Bear had been to Tehachapi prison on a couple of panels and the inmates wore blue jeans and blue work shirts. He peeked at their shoes. The prison issued the inmates a set of leather brogans that always reminded Gary of the shoes he wore in the Air Force.

"Oh dang," he thought, "They got me outnumbered 3 to 1 and all I have is that danged .32 cal Sauer in my back pocket."

The Sauer, I may have mentioned, was a war souvenir from the Big One. His Dad's friend LeRoy had taken it off a dead Nazi and years later had agreed to sell it to his Dad for \$100. Then when his Dad was starting to settle up his affairs, he'd brought up his gun collection and had asked Gary what he wanted. Gary had mentioned the Sauer and his Dad gave it to him. It was a dang nice little gun with virtually no wear and had been well taken care of. Gary had always wanted a PPK and he took the Sauer figuring it was as close as he'd ever get. The Sauer was nice, but that 7.65 Browning (.32) ammo sure didn't pack much of a wallop. The guys said that they had gotten lost on a camping trip and sure were hungry.

"Well sure, I'm always glad to help someone out with a little food," Gary said and gestured towards the house. The guys, apparently thinking that they'd put one over on old Gary walked past him headed for the house. He waited for them to pass and out came

the Sauer. Gary kept it 'cocked and locked' and he thumbed off the safety and said, "Freeze buttheads, I used to do panels up at the prison. You boys must think I just fell off the turnip truck."

One of the guys started to turn round and Gary flat ass shot him in the back. The other two froze solid. Clarence heard the shot and came running carrying one of those dang MP5's. The guy on the ground was wiggling around in a whole lot of pain from that .32's bee sting and the other two guys saw the H&K and their hands shot up before they got one in the back from Gary or one in the front from Clarence. It must have been a hilarious scene. Sharon looked out the window and called 911. A patrol car was dispatched code 3 from Littlerock. A few minutes later, the car slid to a stop and the Deputy came boiling out M-92 in hand. Gary handed the Sauer to Clarence and said he'd be right back. It only took Gary about 5 minutes to clean up and change his drawers and he went back out to where the two cons were sitting on the ground, cuffed, and that other was wiggling around on the ground.

"You shoot that guy?" the Deputy asked.

"You flippin' right I did," Gary said, "I told them to freeze and he started to turn around. I figure he might have a gun and I plugged him with my Sauer. He can't be hurt too bad, that's only a .32."

"What made you think they were cons?" the Deputy asked.

"Well, my partner and I have done a few AA panels at the prison and I sort half recognized the shirt and jeans," Gary explained. "Thing about it was, I got a look at those shoes the prison issues and then I was positive. So, I played dumb and invited them into the house. As soon as they got past me, I pulled the Sauer, thumbed the safety and told them to freeze. That guy on the ground there...well you know what happened after that."

"What's with that H&K?" the Deputy asked, "Automatic weapons are LEO only in California."

"Hell, I know that," Gary said pulling out his wallet. "Here's my Reserve Deputy ID card."

"You got one too mister?" the Deputy asked Clarence.

"Sure do," Clarence said handing Gary the MP-5 and reaching for his wallet. "Here," he said handing the Deputy his Reserve Deputy ID card.

"How about you fellas let me hang onto the guns until we get this all sorted out," the Deputy 'suggested'.

Gary handed the weapons over to the Deputy who put them in the trunk of his patrol car. About that time the ambulance the Deputy called arrived and they checked the guy on

the ground over. He wasn't hurt all that badly so they loaded him on a gurney and put him in the ambulance. About that time, Johnny showed up. He got the Deputy to fill him in and then made Gary and Clarence tell the whole story all over again.

The Three Amigos Part III – The Three Amigos Ride Again – Chapter 58 – Buzz, Buzz, Buzz 2

“It’s ok, give them back their guns,” Johnny said. By this time a third patrol car had arrived and it followed the ambulance to the hospital. The first Deputy returned the guns and put the two cons in that back of his patrol car. He took off to transport them to the Palmdale Sheriff’s station.

“You must have been born under a lucky star, Gary,” Johnny said.

“Why do you say that Johnny?” Gary asked, “I followed procedure pretty good.”

“You did, yes,” Johnny said, “But that guy who was turning around was armed. He could have blown your head off.

“Hell Johnny, that little gun holds 8 shots,” Gary replied, “I’d have used all 8 if I had to.”

“And then what?” Johnny asked.

“Then, I’d have put in this mag,” Gary said pulling his extra magazine from his left rear pocket, “in the gun and shot the other two.”

“Clarence,” Johnny said, “I’d be careful about flashing the MP-5 if I were you.”

“Ok,” Clarence replied and headed for home.

“Gary, one of these days you’re going to get yourself killed,” Johnny said.

“Oh probably,” Gary agreed. “We thought that the Guard had pretty much gotten the cons rounded up.”

“Everyone is working on it,” Johnny said, “But there are still a few like those 3 running around. With the arsenal the 3 of you have, why would you walk around with a popgun like that Sauer?”

“Hell, I don’t know,” Gary admitted, “Guess we thought the problem was over and I stuck it in my pocket just in case we were wrong.”

“The problem is far from over so act according,” Johnny said and got in his patrol car and left.

About that time Ron pulled in from his trip to the stylist.

“Was that Johnny?” he asked.

“Yeah,” Gary said, “We had a little trouble but Clarence and I handled it. No big deal.

Johnny says that the problems aren't over and that we should keep ourselves armed for a while yet."

With that, Gary returned to his home leaving Ronald sitting in his car wondering what the hell was going on. Well, if Gary wouldn't tell him, Clarence would, so he went over to Clarence's and got the real story. Gary cleaned the Sauer, swapped out the magazines and put it back in his sock drawer where he usually kept the thing. The mailman had brought a box from Kirkpatrick and he opened it, got the new holster and swapped those out. That Tequila Rig wasn't nearly as heavy with the single 4⁵/₈" Vaquero, Clarence had been right about that. But, he decided that he probably needed a little more firepower than a 6 shot revolver so he got the Kimber, serviced it and strapped on a pistol belt with the Kimber and 4 extra mags. Then, he turned on the TV and plopped down in a chair to get caught up on the news.

This Diablo Canyon thing was turning out to be quite the disaster. For one thing, there was a stretch of the coast that had a fair amount of residual radiation and they were talking billions for cleanup. But that was the good news. A whole lot of people had been trapped on the 101 (Ventura) freeway and some had gotten lethal doses. To make matters worse, thousands more had received a less than lethal dose and those hospitals were swamped. Every time you turned around, it seemed like LA was losing another hospital. Gary got on the phone to the Citadel and asked if they were getting any of the patients from the 101. Were they ever! They'd even resorted to pulling the few cots they had out to provide beds for the patients. Gary asked how the supplies were holding out and learned that it had been a good thing that they'd had that large inventory. Even so, they were starting to run low on some things.

Gar-Bear tracked down Ron; he was still at Clarence's. He told Ron and Clarence to get armed up, they had to get to the Citadel and get some supplies arranged. The Three Amigos piled into the pickup and headed to the hospital. They spent the next several hours on the phone, ordering, pleading, cajoling and flat near threatening their medical suppliers. However, given their persistence and the size of the orders, they managed to fill in most of the voids. In this case, it wasn't so much a shortage of medical supplies out there as it was that they simply weren't where they needed to be. Some things just weren't going to be easy to come by. They needed a whole lot more blood than the Red Cross could provide, for example. There was a message from the Foundation so Gary returned the call. The Foundation was concerned about their supplies too and had been busy organizing additional supplies; mostly the ones that The Three Amigos had trouble getting. Gary treated Ron and Clarence to a steak at Outback and decided that was the last time for that. Maybe that explained Ron's problem with cholesterol, too. He'd eaten the biggest steak Outback had. Clarence had done the 12oz sirloin and Gary the 9oz.

It was probably a good thing that the AV was loaded with hospitals. All four of them were filled to capacity and beyond. They'd even ended up taking a few people to the Air Force hospital at Edwards. With ample warning, the folks over in Apple Valley and Victorville had managed to head north on I-15 and the Army had put them up at Ft. Irwin. Most of the people in Barstow must have had the same idea because they left too, even

though it hadn't proven to be necessary. Surprisingly, parts of the Ventura freeway had been spared, especially to the west. It must have been the wind.

Sacramento...

In 2001, the California Energy Commission had done a 12-page study. This study had developed solutions to the technical problems associated with so-called reactor core-meltdown accidents. A principal conclusion of the report was that it was feasible to design passive systems to reduce potential consequences from core-melt accidents to very low levels. Underground siting was only one of several alternatives. The two underground siting concepts developed, each augmented to prevent buildup of excessive pressures, could effectively eliminate public health consequences from hypothetical, highly unlikely, yet physically possible reactor accidents. In addition, alternatives to underground siting, such as remote siting and controlled release of excessive pressure through simple, engineered filter systems, appear feasible. While not as fully effective, these alternatives capture some of the benefits of underground siting at less cost. Gar-Bear had run across a citation to the report when he'd been checking out Three-Mile Island and Chernobyl. He hadn't been able to find the report, but he knew it existed.

So did the Governor and the California Assembly. In a classic case of closing the barn door after the horse was gone, the Assembly passed legislation mandating that future reactors be built underground in accordance with the study's recommendations and the Governor quickly signed the measure into law. What was the point? Hoover and Parker would be back online in 2 more years, resolving the electrical and water problems. The point was, as it later turned out, that Edison wanted to build a new reactor out in the desert in eastern California. The federal government had given the necessary approvals but Sacramento was dragging its heels. Apparently realizing that California was facing an ongoing energy crunch and that the Diablo Canyon incident only added to the problem, an Assemblyman had introduced the bill. In the wake of the Diablo Canyon incident, California managed to approve a new reactor, but it had to be built underground.

Washington...

Santorum had called Goss, Mueller, Prescott and Truscott to a meeting at the White House. With the Diablo Canyon incident, the task force had been disbanded, but Santorum had something in mind. Santorum had done a stint as the Secretary of DHS and he had a pretty good handle on the problems the US faced dealing with terrorists. He'd had a fleeting thought about what to do about it when Diablo Canyon went down and since that thought went against just about everything he believed in had dismissed it. But, as sometimes happens, that nagging thought just wouldn't go away. He decided to run it by the 4 men from the task force.

"Director Goss," Santorum began, "Back when Bush appointed you Director, you said that it would take you 5-years to get the CIA turned around and the problems resolved. How are you doing on that?"

Goss was a bit taken aback by the question. This was the type of question best dealt with in a private meeting. But, he was on the spot and decided what the hell.

“Mr. President,” Goss began, “I was pretty much on track with my estimate. The agency has greatly increased its HumInt resources around the world and we’ve made necessary adjustments internally to alleviate the problems that led up to 9/11.” Goss went on for some time detailing the various changes.

“Good, you’ve done a great job” Santorum acknowledged and turned his attention to Mueller.

“How are the communications between the FBI and the CIA these days?” Santorum asked Mueller.

“Couldn’t be better,” Mueller replied. “Mr. President, any lingering problems we had were pretty much ironed out because of the two task forces.”

The other two men, Prescott and Truscott were only there because Santorum decided that he wanted their feedback on this idea of his.

“Gentlemen,” Santorum began, “I’d had an idea. It pretty much goes against my grain, but to tell you the truth, it’s nagged me to the point that I called this meeting. Everything that gets said in this room from this point on is to be considered classified at the highest possible level. If word of what I’m about to suggest leaks out we’re all going to go down.”

The 4 Directors agreed to the condition and Santorum continued. We’ve all heard about Watergate and the Iran-Contra Affair, but what about the ones we didn’t hear about that were successful? Kind of makes you wonder...

Santorum continued, “I won’t say that our problems with terrorists necessarily began in ‘93 when they blew up the WTC, but let’s use that as a starting point. 8 years later, terrorists managed to bring down the WTC and did a pretty good job on the Pentagon. Then there was that nuclear attack on 11/12/05 that all but brought the country to its knees. Add the 9/17/07 Hoover Dam incident and those pipelines and the problem is starting to get out of proportion. The Diablo Canyon incident was the last straw. Look, I did my bit at DHS, so I know what you’ve all been up against here. If the American public had any idea how many incidents you folks had managed to prevent, they’d probably never believe it. Anyway, my thinking is that maybe we’ve been doing this all wrong. How would the 4 of you react to a suggestion that we take the terrorism to the terrorists?”

The Three Amigos Part III – The Three Amigos Ride Again – Chapter 59 – The Project

You could have heard a pin drop. Santorum's suggestion was outrageous. Was 'Mr. Clean', as they affectionately referred to him behind his back, actually suggesting what they thought they'd just heard? Goss was the first to regain his composure.

"Mr. President," Goss said, "I like it. It goes so much against everything that America stands for that we would have total deniability. The thing is... we don't actually have too many assets to handle the 'wet work'."

The other 3 men had yet to regain their voices.

"You know," Santorum continued, "Maybe Barbara Boxer did us a favor."

"She killed off a lot of those terrorists," Goss said, "That's for sure."

"That wasn't what I was getting at," Santorum continued. "What I had in mind was the deal she worked out with Putin. As you all know, Putin raised hell with her over those bombings and she gave him the entire Middle East except for Israel. (The KGB as a point of reference had been renamed the Federal Security Service. Putin had headed the agency before he'd become President of the Russian Federation.) I think that Putin owes the US a big one. How true is it that the KGB had a lot of those 'wet work' assets?"

"That was then, Mr. President," Goss replied, "And this is now. But, I expect that they still have a few. To be totally honest, since we've been getting along with Russia so well, we've been concentrating on the terrorists. But, it won't take me long to get you an accurate assessment."

"Do that please, Director Goss," Santorum instructed.

By this time, the other 3 men had finally regained their voices.

"I don't know whether I agree or disagree," Mueller said, "But Goss has a point. We'd have total deniability. Hell, if push came to shove, we could even blame it on the Israelis."

The meeting lasted for some time as the 5 men worked through the details of what they were now calling 'The Project'. Goss would get Santorum the information he needed and Santorum would contact Putin. If necessary, Santorum would try and schedule a mini-summit meeting with Putin as a cover. The best place to hide, after all, was in plain view. That's what had gotten so many previous Presidents', Nixon for example, in trouble. They'd gone sneaking around trying to cover everything up.

Moscow...

Putin had taken Boxer up on her offer and had given her a pass. She'd resigned almost immediately thereafter and very few people actually knew about the deal they'd worked out, or so he'd thought. The Middle East had been a real mess after Boxer had dropped those nukes and frankly, Russia lacked the resources to step in and clean the mess up. The ultimatum that had been given the UN had actually worked in Russia's favor. Most of the UN troops were transferred directly from the US to the Middle East and they worked to clean up after Boxer. A whole lot of people had been killed in the attacks, but as with anything, there'd been a lot of survivors. When the UN about had the mess cleaned up, it had taken months, Russia moved in. The UN was powerless to resist and France and Germany, especially, had blocked resolutions in the Security Council to censure Russia.

The Israelis had been the first to object, but when Russia gave them a wide berth, they eventually settled down. Israel was having its share of problems with the Palestinians and they concentrated on trying to resolve that problem. Russia had actually bitten off all that it could chew. They'd had their own problems with the Chechen rebels and moving into the Middle East had only exacerbated their problems. Thus when Santorum approached Putin with his rather off-the-wall proposal, Putin was immediately interested. And, while Putin denied having any of those 'wet workers' in the Federal Security Service, Santorum had rather pointedly addressed the subject based on Goss's information. The 2 men agreed to a hastily called mini-summit, purportedly to discuss an oil deal, and the stage was set.

Palmdale...

It had been over a week since that shooting incident involving the 3 cons. Gary couldn't seem to make up his mind about what to do about walking around armed either. One day he'd be wearing the Kimber and another, he'd be walking around carrying his Winchester and wearing the Vaquero. It reminded Ronald of the movie *Heartbreak Ridge*. In the movie, Clint Eastwood, Gunny Highway in case you're wondering, had this T-shirt thing and Gary's constant flip-flopping brought the movie to mind. *Heartbreak Ridge* was the source of one of Gary's favorite quotes, *Improvise. Adapt. Overcome*. As silly as it might seem, that quote had served Gary pretty well, too.

The hospitals in southern California were having one hell of a time dealing with the victims of the Diablo Canyon Incident. Radiation exposure wasn't one of those things that one got over overnight like the common cold. The people who had experienced the lighter doses of radiation were being treated and released to make room in the hospitals for the others who had received larger doses of radiation. The system was overwhelmed, but starting to catch up. The medical supply companies had filled those orders that The Three Amigos had placed, in fact, supplies were still coming in. And, in the last week, the Guard units were really beginning to get a handle on rounding up those cons. At the moment, there were less than 300 men unaccounted for.

"I see that the President is having a mini-summit with Putin," Ron announced. "I wonder

what that is all about?”

“TNN said it was an oil summit,” Gary replied. “It’s about time that the US and Russia buried the hatchet and started to work together. Maybe an oil deal will break the ice and they can start to work together to solve the terrorist problem. Russia has had its share of problems with those Chechen rebels for a pretty long time now. You know, I half figured that Putin’s change of policy after that school thing back in ‘04 would have resolved the matter. But, apparently, there just isn’t any good way to deal with the terrorists. Hell, Israel is still fighting with the Palestinians. And from time to time word leaks out that the Russians are having their problems dealing with the Middle East.”

“I thought you said Benjamin Netanyahu in would solve that problem,” Clarence commented.

“What can I say fellas?” Gary responded, “I was wrong again. Just add it to my long list of screw-ups.”

“When are you going to decide what you’re going to carry for a gun?” Ron asked.

“Why?” Gary retorted, “Is there some rule that says that I have to wear a certain gun on a certain day?”

“No, Gary,” Clarence replied, “There isn’t. But you’re confusing the hell out of Ron and me. We’re The Three Amigos and we sort of like to wear whatever you’re wearing. It just looks better.”

“Well, excuse me,” Gary laughed. “Ok, from now on, I’ll wear the Vaquero on the odd days and the Kimber on the even days, does that help?”

“Why don’t you just pick one and wear it all of the time, partner?” Ron asked.

“Ron, if I did that,” Gary continued to laugh, “You two fellas wouldn’t be confused and I’m having a hell of a good time trying to keep the two of you off guard.”

“Then what’s this even-day, odd-day, bit?” Ron snapped.

“Oh that. I was lying,” Gary admitted.

Hamas was on something like its 336th leader, give or take. Even Netanyahu had given in and resorted to killing Hamas members. Hadn’t solved the problem, either. And the wall that Israel had built had slowed the terrorists down, but hadn’t stopped them. Africa, with its Muslim population, was producing a whole new generation of terrorists. But, I suppose you folks sort of expected that, didn’t you? It was kind of a shame that no one else did, though. Those Africans blended right in with the American population too unless they opened their mouths and spoke.

Geneva...

Santorum and Putin quickly reached an agreement. Santorum needed Putin's assets and Putin needed America's help. As it happened, neither nation any longer had a large cadre of people doing wet work, but together, they could field a reasonably sized force. The two men didn't agree on everything, but that was to be expected. What they did agree on was the key points of the proposal Santorum had put forth. The basic idea was to take out terrorist units, not just single people. To do this, they needed more than just that cadre of specialists. In the end, they concluded that they needed to employ their Special Forces in addition to their spies. Why the SEALs and not the Army's Special Forces or any of the US's other operators? Santorum had something entirely different in mind for the Army Special Forces. In the back of his mind, Santorum felt that he was perhaps missing something and he needed the Special Forces to cover his 6. And Force Recon was going to be detailed inside the country to deal with any more terrorists that decided to take on the US. It sure looked great on paper. And by the way, the leaders' announced after the meeting an agreement for Russia to sell Middle Eastern oil to the US for \$24 per barrel. It made a good cover.

Jakarta...

The mini-summit had taken place during the first week of November 2009. It had been a hurried up affair, from all outward appearances, and the media had scrambled to cover the event. All, except for Geraldo. Geraldo was having one hell of a time making anything out of the Hambali story. He had come to Indonesia just knowing that he could track the guy down. After all, who wouldn't want to be interviewed by Geraldo? I hate to tell you this dude, but just about everyone, that's who. 600-yards...

Palmdale...

"Do you know why I hate lawyers and reporters and politicians so much?" Gary asked Ron out of the blue.

"Because they're smarter than you?" Ron volleyed back.

"Ha-ha, Ronald," Gary replied. "And since you asked, I'll tell you. The reason that I don't like those folks is that they're all professional liars."

"Sort of like people who write patriot fiction, huh?" Clarence observed.

"One of these days, Clarence, one of these days..." Gary replied.

"Right, Gary," Clarence retorted, "What's that you always say about brown cows?"

"Brown cows gi.." Gary started to say, "Crap, one of these days you'd think I learn not to fall into one of your traps."

“That’s a hell of a price Santorum got from the Russians for that oil,” Ron changed the subject.

“You mean the \$24?” Gary said, “Well why the hell not, Barbara Boxer gave them the oil in the first place, they ought to sell it to us cheap.”

“What’s the deal with the SEALS?” Ron asked.

“TNN said it was a training exercise,” Gary reported.

“With the Spetsnaz?” Ron asked. “That hardly seems likely.”

“Well why not, Ron?” Gary countered, “The US and Russia are trading partners now. We have common interests to look out for.”

“I sure would like to have me one of those knives,” Clarence said.

“Are you talking about those Spetsnaz knives that shot the blade, Clarence?” Gary asked.

“Yeah, one of them,” Clarence acknowledged.

“My friend. Let me set you straight,” Gary laughed. “In the first place, that wasn’t a Spetsnaz knife. While the Spetsnaz are some of the best knife fighters in the world, that knife you’re talking about wasn’t one of theirs. In the second place, Spetsnaz preferred to use a shovel for fighting. And man, let me tell you, they were experts with one of those little shovels.”

“I’d ask,” Ron said, “But what’s the use?” (Research again, Ron?)

“You might figure it out yet, Ronald,” Gary laughed, “I was beginning to lose hope.”

“What’s your crystal ball and the net tell you about that mini-summit meeting?” Ron asked.

“Nothing much really, Ron, but, my gut tells me that there’s more to it than meets the eye,” Gary replied.

“Did you ever think about getting a patent on your gut?” Ron asked, “You’d be rich.”

“Ron, it is probably just indigestion Gary gets from eating all of those Snickers almond bars,” Clarence suggested.

“I haven’t had an almond bar in days, Clarence,” Gary announced. “And as far as making money, some folks say I should sell my fiction. I checked into it. It ain’t gonna happen. Anyway, you’re just jealous that you didn’t educate your gut. My fiction includes a

whole lot of cut and paste. Most of the time, I put in a web link so people know where I stole the information. But, you can't publish a plagiarized story. You fellas keep forgetting that the original purpose of my stories was entertainment and education. Well, it's been pretty entertaining writing them and like I said one time, if one guy in Florida bought a package of batteries because of one of my stories, I'd be satisfied. And do you know what? I've gotten quite an education myself writing that stuff."

"Let's get back to your gut," Ron suggested. "What is your gut telling you?"

"Now I'm a professional gut reader?" Gary snorted. "Well, that training exercise story they had on TNN stinks to high heaven. I don't believe it for a minute. But, I don't really have an explanation other than I just don't believe it. That Geraldo is over in Indonesia looking for Hambali, by the way. I hope he finds him, but I think that government report that Hambali is dead is probably true. Besides if Geraldo is looking for him, that just makes me all the more certain."

"Gary," Ron asked, "Did you ever notice how you change subjects just about every sentence?"

"That's the way my mind works Ronald," Gary smirked, "Sometimes my mind is going so fast that I forget what I was going to say halfway through a sentence."

"I thought that was your short-term memory loss," Ron suggested.

"Yeah, that too, Ron," Gary agreed. "But do you know what I really think?"

"That the redhead was a hot number?" Ron asked.

"That, too," Gary replied. "What I was going to say was that until the Israelis and Hamas quit fighting each other there will always be terrorists in the world. If I were President, I'd go kill me some terrorists and give them a dose of their own medicine."

Funny you should say that, Gary, even as the words passed from your lips, agents of the CIA and FSS had slipped into Israel and were scouting targets. And, in Indonesia, Geraldo had finally gotten a break. Someone was going to show him where Hambali was. Remember the guy with the .22? He didn't much care for Geraldo. 600-yards hell, more like 6". Pop, pop, here you go croc. (If Geraldo is a journalist, I'm probably the Queen of England.)

The Three Amigos Part III – The Three Amigos Ride Again – Chapter 60 – The Project 2

The problem with infiltrating Israel was that they had the Mossad. These guys weren't superman, but they were pretty darned efficient. Besides, they spied on the US and Russia on a regular basis and had pictures of everyone's agents. Does the name Jonathan Pollard, the spy who spent 18 months collecting and selling classified American intelligence to Israel from his position in US Naval Intelligence ring a bell? Say it isn't so. Tell me that Israel, our ally, doesn't spy on us. No? Oh, well.

Israel...

The Mossad picked up on the foreign agents about a minute after they'd stepped off the aircraft. They decided to keep an eye on them and find out what they were up to. By the way, did you know that the Mossad denies knowing anything about 'wet work'? There have been several books published on the subject. The Russians and Americans seemed to be interested in locating and shadowing Hamas members. This made the Israelis take note in a big hurry. In fact, it led the Israelis to leave a note in the hotel mailbox of one of the Russian agents, telling him where he could find more Hamas people. The FSS and CIA hadn't fallen off the turnip truck and they sort of figured that the Mossad would pick up on them. In fact, they were counting on it. They'd heard of Jonathan Pollard, too.

It turned out that the Israeli tip was pretty good. In a matter of days, the FSS and CIA had identified a cell on the West Bank that they wanted to hit. The Spetsnaz and SEAL Teams were just finishing up training and the time to strike was while the iron was hot. The whole flippin' thing would have been impossible, but the Israelis had built that flippin' fence and the cell wasn't on the Israeli side of the wall. It was a small terrorist cell of only about 2-dozen individuals. It was overkill, but they sent in 3 Spetsnaz and 3 SEALS. Fifteen minutes after they'd landed, the Special Forces people were aboard a VH-53D Pave-Low III headed for the Med. Soon thereafter, Al-Jazeera was broadcasting news of another Israeli atrocity. Putin was happy, Santorum was happy and the Israelis were used to being blamed for everything. FOX News announced that it had lost touch with Geraldo.

The terrorists didn't quite know what to make of the entire situation. They hadn't seen any evidence of any activity by any of the Israeli forces. Meanwhile the FSS and CIA guys moved to Gaza as a result of another Israeli tip. They had good information once again except that this cell was bigger, almost 50 people. They watched and eventually figured out that periodically the entire cell got together, although they didn't know why. The next time that cell did get together, a couple of Zodiacs landed on the Gaza coast and the cell was toast. The Team this time was composed of 6 SEALS and 6 Spetsnaz. Man that's overkill if I've ever heard of it. And one more time, Putin was happy, Santorum was happy, the Israelis got blamed and the terrorists were even more confused.

Palmdale...

“Well,” Gary said, “Things are looking up.”

“Huh?” Clarence replied.

“You two guys don’t think it was really the Israelis that did in those terrorist cells do you?” Gary asked. “That’s not their style. They go in with helicopters and guns blazing. Then they shoot the terrorists up with a bunch of rockets. That’s that bunch of SEALs and Spetsnaz.”

“Come on Gary,” Ron said, “How could you possibly know something like that?”

“I don’t, Ron, I’m guessing to tell the truth,” Gary admitted, “On the other hand, I’d put money on it.”

“Gary, that isn’t how we Americans do things,” Clarence insisted. “Besides the President would never stand for the CIA or anyone doing something like that.”

“I agree with Clarence,” Ron announced. “You’re really off base on this one partner.”

“Maybe so,” Gary said, “Or maybe that’s what they’re counting on.”

“Who’s ‘they’?” Ron snapped.

“Hey, it’s just a theory,” Gary said, “How do I know who ‘they’ are? What the hell, let’s say Santorum and the task force that was disbanded?”

“You’ve seen one too many movies,” Ron said.

“You asked,” Gary snapped. “I didn’t like him anyway.”

“Didn’t like who?” Ron was becoming exasperated.

“Geraldo,” Gary replied, “FOX News reported him missing.”

“When was that?” Clarence asked.

“A couple of weeks ago,” Gary replied.

“Tell me something Gar-Bear,” Ron said. “Have you ever thought about seeing a Psychiatrist?”

“Nope. They’re nothing but a bunch of pill pushers,” Gary answered. “Saw a few Psychologists in my time, though.”

“Really? What did they say?” Clarence asked.

“Just that I was crazy,” Gary laughed. “Why?”

“Just wondering,” Clarence said.

After Gary left, Clarence said to Ron, “That Gary is quite the kidder.”

“What do you mean Clarence?” Ron asked.

“That business about the Psychologists,” Clarence replied, “Telling him he was crazy.”

“Clarence, for once in his life, old Gar-Bear was telling you the truth,” Ron said. “That’s what they told him.”

“So Gary is crazy?” Clarence asked.

“I didn’t say that partner, I just said that that’s what the Psychologists told him,” Ron explained. “And it’s true. Man did he have fun with them. First he saw Dr. Good and sucked him in. Later, he ended up seeing some guy in Lancaster and had him convinced that he was schizophrenic.”

“Why would Gary do something like that?” Clarence asked.

“Gary did really well in the Drug and Alcohol school until he got into the class on the DSM IV,” Ron explained. “About that time he was chasing after Kathy and he didn’t have his mind on business like he should have. Anyway to make a long story short, Gary blew the final in that class and ended up with a B. You know what a perfectionist he is. That B blew his average and upset him pretty badly. After he’d gotten his act together, he ended up seeing the shrinks. Anyway, he decided to see if he really had learned the DSM IV and he picked an illness and shined them on.”

“Huh. What did Gary end up with in that course?” Clarence asked.

“9 A’s and 1 B,” Ron said. “He was 3rd in the class. Had a 3.9GPA. He was beaten out by Brenda, she had a 4.0 and Janice who had a 3.96.” (9 A’s and 1 A-)

“Well I’ll be darned,” Clarence said.

“Probably, Clarence,” Ron replied, “Especially if you can’t tell when Gary is shining you on and telling the truth.”

The problem with guys like Gary, and Gary especially, was there was such a thing as being too smart for your own good. Not that Gary was any genius, but he did have a pretty quick mind. Back when Gary was still figuring out how to get sober, one of the gals in AA had walked up to him one day and said, “Gary, you’re a pretty smart fella. That’s what your problem is trying to get sober. You know what, Gary, you’d better get

stupid or one of these days you're going to die." Shortly after that, Gary had gotten sober. A while later, he'd dumped bimbo #2 and had gone back to his wife.

Washington...

"Gentlemen, this is working out better than I'd thought it would," Santorum announced.

"Well, we hadn't been sure if the Israelis would help us or not, Mr. President," Goss said.

"Your assessment was right on the mark," Santorum replied. "We'll continue the operation for now. Does anyone else have anything that I should know about?"

"Has anyone noticed that we're having an increase in African students?" Prescott asked.

"As a matter of fact," Mueller said, "We noticed that too. Does the CIA have anything we should know about?"

"I don't know if it means anything," Goss replied, "But there has been some increased activity in the Sudan and in Somalia. I'll have my people look into it immediately."

"That sounds like a good idea to me," Santorum added. "There are quite a few Muslims in Africa and we wouldn't want to get caught with our pants down, again. I have Force Recon on standby, just in case. And, if I've missed something, we can send the Green Berets to Africa to nip whatever is going on in the bud."

The Three Amigos Part III – The Three Amigos Ride Again – Chapter 61 – Blackhawk Down

After the meeting broke, Mueller made a beeline back to FBI Headquarters. It wasn't going to be him caught with his pants down. He called in an Assistant Director and directed that several agents begin looking into the entry records for Africans, especially men claiming to be college students. Truscott headed back to the ATF and put out the word to contact the explosives distributors and dealers and give their security another pass, he must have been thinking about his pants, too. Goss called his DI on the spot and told him that he needed to know everything about what was going on in Africa, yesterday. Prescott went back to DHS and raised the threat level back to yellow. And, President Santorum gave Force Recon and the Special Forces a heads up. In case you're wondering, the same croc ate Geraldo that ate Hambali. Remember, "pop, pop, here you go croc?"

The switch to yellow and the sudden activities of the FBI and ATF didn't escape the attention of the media. They began to speculate wildly, but everyone was stone walling them, except for Prescott and he was pretty vague. Some mumble-jumble about a perceived threat. FOX News was also speculating that Geraldo might actually be dead and put together an hour-long special to highlight his career. Lowest ratings they ever had.

This thing with the Mossad and the FSS and CIA was working out pretty good. It was pretty apparent that the Israelis were using the other two to clean house. They'd planted an observer in Gaza and found out how Russia and the US were pulling it off. In places like Iraq and Iran, Syria and Jordan, the Russians were really taking it in the chops. Every time another Hamas cell was hit, some bunch of insurgents would plant another IED and blow up another Russian vehicle. It was suddenly Afghanistan all over again. Putin called Santorum and complained that they were losing as many troops as they were killing terrorists. Santorum promised to rush a \$10 billion aid package through Congress to help Russia out. Yeah, like the US could really afford to spend another \$10 billion.

It probably hadn't been entirely Ronald Reagan's 600-ship Navy that had brought the wall down. It was more like a combination of things. That war in Afghanistan had done a number on the Soviet economy and when they tried to keep up with the US, their house of cards came tumbling down. Then Gorbachev had gotten booted; Yeltsin had selected Putin as his successor.

But one wall comes down and another goes up. Human beings had to be the dumbest things that God had ever thought up. It wasn't any better in the US. A bunch of immigrants had moved to the new country on the other side of the Atlantic and had stolen the land from its 'rightful owners', the Native Americans, killing a bunch of them in the process and dumping the remainder on Reservations. But, the Indians had finally gotten even by selling Cigarettes and then by opening Casinos. Guess who was having the last laugh?

California...

The local economy in San Luis Obispo was in the toilet having lost those 1,200 jobs at Diablo Canyon. Edison offered most of them jobs when their new reactor came on line in a few years. Meanwhile, they were assisting with the cleanup along the Ventura Freeway. Talk about a commute! It sure was a good thing that Russia was selling the US oil at bargain basement prices. It might have been just a cover story, but Russia had to go through with it for appearances. It was only costing them production costs anyway and between the sale of oil to the US and that \$10 billion aid package that Santorum had pushed through Congress, their economy was really looking up.

Palmdale...

"Clarence, I was thinking," Ron said.

"Uh oh," Clarence thought.

"About what Ron?" Clarence asked.

"You know that trick Sharon and I played on Gary with the redhead?" Ron asked.

"Yeah, what about it?" Clarence asked.

"Well, it occurred to me that old Gar-Bear must have opened his eyes and thought he'd died and gone to Heaven," Ron explained.

"Wasn't nothing like that Ron," Clarence assured him. "Didn't you catch that tune Gary began to hum under his breath?"

"I did, but I can't say that I recognized it, partner," Ron admitted.

"Ron, that was an old Cole Porter song," Clarence announced. "I think that the name was, *You'd be so nice to come home to*. I wouldn't worry about your little prank at all."

"Hi fellas, what's up?" Gary asked entering Ron's kitchen.

"We was just talking about you," Clarence announced.

"Oh? Tell me about it, I knew my ears were burning for some reason," Gary chuckled.

"Wasn't nothing, partner," Ron replied, "We were just discussing your taste in music."

"The name of the song was, *You'd be so nice to come home to*, Ron," Gary said.

"How do you do that Gar-Bear?" Ron asked.

“Do what?”

“How do you always seem to know what people are thinking about or that it’s your pal Fleataxi on the phone when it rings?” Ron asked. “You don’t even have Caller ID.”

“How should I know?” Gary asked back. “On the other hand, maybe I had the Contractor wire your homes when they were built.”

Ron fell for that one big time. He flat near pulled his house apart looking for hidden mikes after Gary and Clarence left. It was actually just Gary’s trick memory. He might not remember what he’d had for breakfast, but when something made an impression on him, he’d file it away for future use. Gary and Fleataxi had visited about it at one time and Gary had demonstrated. He was trying to think of the name of a movie and couldn’t. But, he’d remembered the name of the actor. Since he didn’t know how to spell the actor’s name, he put in ‘Hunter’ in the IMDb search engine and up popped the TV series. He clicked on Fred Dryer’s name and brought up a list of his credits. Right above the TV series Hunter, was the name of the movie, *Death Before Dishonor*. Gary was trying to make a point about Force Recon and had remembered the beginning of the movie because they stuck those insignia right into the guys’ chests. They call that Associative Memory, according to Fleataxi. Apparently Stacy/Barbara had left quite an impression.

The next day...

“Find those mikes yet Ron?” Gary asked.

“Butthead,” Ron muttered.

“You mean that you fell for that one Ron?” Clarence asked. “Shame on you. By the way, I didn’t find no mikes, either.”

“The Citadel is starting to thin out its patient population, finally,” Ron announced.

“Guess we’d better make a run in to the Hospital and reorder supplies,” Gary said. “That way, we’ll be ready the next time the terrorists strike.”

“What terrorists?” Clarence asked.

“Well it can’t be the people from the Middle East,” Gary said, “The SEALs and Spetsnaz are giving them hell. And I figure that Hambali is dead, so it must be your people, Clarence, the Africans.”

“Ain’t my people,” Clarence huffed up. “Least ways not for 150 years or more. It’s those young folks call themselves African Americans or Black. I’m older, so I’m a Negro.”

“Well, you learn something new every day,” Gary responded, embarrassed. “Anyway, who is left to terrorize the US except the Africans?”

“Do you think that’s why DHS raised the threat level?” Ron asked.

“Don’t rightly know, Ron, my cape is at the cleaners,” Gary replied, lifting a line from Fleataxi.

Israel...

The Israelis had quite a shopping list. And since the American and Russians seemed hell bent on killing off terrorists, they were taking advantage of it. The media was raising hell, but there was nothing new about that. The UN was now talking about sanctions, but they did that a lot these days; talk that is. Seemed like that was all the UN ever did anymore was talk. Probably still licking their wounds from the shellacking they’d gotten first from the US and later from the Russians. The CIA and FSS had gotten comfortable allowing the Mossad to pick their targets, too. They were making a mistake, but didn’t know it, yet.

The warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid died on August 1, 1996 possibly as a result of gunshot wounds sustained a week earlier in a fight with competing factions. His son, Hussein Mohamed Farrah, migrated to the US when he was 14 years old. He stayed 16 years in the nation and became a naturalized citizen, and later a US Marine. Two days later after his father’s death, the Habr Gidr clan selected him to become the new President of Aidid’s self-proclaimed republic. Hussein Mohammed Farrah was seen by the West as a chance of improvement for the relationships between them and Somalia. When asked about his Marine days, he replied: “Once a Marine, always a Marine.” Yeah, right and brown cows...

Farrah was the ideal person to put together the next terrorist plot; he was after all a Naturalized American and a former Marine. He wasn’t totally stupid, either. The college students were just a cover for what he was really doing. He figured that if he got the US to concentrate on an increase in college students from Somalia, they wouldn’t notice the group of terrorists he sent to the US early in the first decade of the new century under the guise of immigrants to the US. Worked, too. He didn’t have any nukes or explosives for that matter, but he had a plan. The people he selected were all explosives experts and when they immigrated to the US, they took their families as a cover. They eventually found jobs working in the mining industry. The plan had been a long time in the making and they even endured some of the terrorist attacks Hambali had arranged. But, now it was their turn. While the mining industry is big on ANFO, it has occasion to use other explosives. The easiest way in the world to get your hands on some of those explosives is to misrepresent how much you used in a blasting job. You couldn’t get much at a time, but they had plenty of time and now had plenty of explosives and everything else that they needed. The men kept in loose touch with each other via the Internet.

Israel...

The Israelis had a suspected terrorist cell, but weren’t quite sure of their information.

They figured that they could pass it off to the US and Russians to check out. If they were wrong, it would be no big deal; the FSS and CIA would figure it out and not strike the cell. Unfortunately, the FSS and the CIA had come to depend upon the information supplied by the Israelis and hadn't been quite as thorough as they usually were. They sort of glossed over a detail or two and had gotten it wrong. It was the largest cell to date and they brought in a pretty good contingent to Gaza to wipe out the cell. The SEALs and Spetsnaz were up to their usual standards and they'd taken out the entire cell, quietly and efficiently, just as they had been trained to do. Al-Jazeera reported the event with its usual diatribe accusing the Israelis of yet another atrocity. And, as usual, the US media reported the event widely.

Back in the US of A...

The thing about it was, Al-Jazeera had it right for a change. It took a while to come out; and suddenly everyone was scrambling to cover his or her behind. The Israelis denied any knowledge of the attack and for once, Hamas backed Israel. Hamas claimed that they had been keeping an eye on the Israelis and they were certain that someone other than the Israelis were behind the attack. The Israelis more or less said, *We told you so*, but kept mum about who was really behind the whole thing. They had an appropriation sitting in the US Congress and weren't about to do anything to mess that up. It might have worked had not some investigative journalist remembered those joint SEAL/Spetsnaz training exercises. It sure as hell wasn't Geraldo. Anyway, the guy put 2 and 2 together, did a whole lot of research and slowly began to figure it out. When he took the completed story to his editor, the editor blew a gasket. Something like this, the editor claimed, simply wasn't possible. The journalist said screw it and started to shop the story.

Eventually, someone bought it and the story came out. It sort started as an item of interest, receiving some sarcastic remarks on TNN and FOX and the other networks, but the more the media looked at the story, the more they began to realize that it might just be true. Santorum and his group fielded the medias questions and freely admitted that the US and Russia had held joint training exercises. They didn't know how that journalist had put 2 and 2 together and come up with 5, but he sure had. Santorum even pointed to the fact that he had Force Recon and the Green Berets on standby against the possibility of a terrorist attack. Mueller wanted to deflect everyone by pointing a finger at those African students, but he couldn't, they come up clean as a whistle.

And Truscott was behind the 8-ball because the explosives distributors and dealers were doing a really good job with their security and there hadn't been any thefts of explosives. Prescott had dropped the threat level back to blue explaining that the information that DHS had originally relied on had proven not to be true.

The Three Amigos Part III – The Three Amigos Ride Again – Chapter 62 – Blackhawk Down 2

The White House...

“This whole thing really went to hell in a hurry,” Santorum said. “I guess our plausible deniability wasn’t as good as we thought it was.”

“Mr. President we really haven’t denied anything,” Goss pointed out. “You’ve seen that Intel on Africa that we came up with. That Farrah definitely has something in the works.”

“I agree,” Santorum said, “That was some good Intel by the way. The problem is that Bob’s people over at the Bureau came up empty on those African students. What did you find, again, Bob?”

“They were mostly Somalis,” Mr. President, “But as I reported, our investigations were exhaustive and those students are clean.”

“My people did a thorough job with the explosives distributors and dealers, Mr. President,” Truscott added. “Every ounce of explosives has been accounted for and their security is as good as or better than need be.”

“The problem that the 5 of you have here,” the President’s Chief of Staff said, “Is that anything you do or say to direct the medias’ attention to the real problem will be seen as an attempt to deflect their attention from The Project.”

“Dang, dang, dang,” Santorum replied. “You’re right, of course, do you see any way out of this?”

“For what it’s worth Mr. President,” the Chief of Staff continued, “Why deny it? Mistakes happen. My advice is to not repeat the mistakes that Nixon made. You know, if he’d just come out and said, *Sure, we did it, so what? The other side does it too, but a little more skillfully*, the whole thing would have probably blown over. It may be a cliché, but in cases like this, honesty is the best policy.”

“It’s not that I don’t agree with what you say,” Santorum responded, “But that was in 1973. The media is a whole different animal these days.”

“That’s true, Mr. President,” the Chief of Staff replied, “But the American public is still the American public. I believe that given all the terrorism this country has experienced, they’ll see it as a gutsy move.”

“Well...” Santorum acknowledged, “It was my lame brained idea that got us into this mess, so I’ll bite the bullet. Go ahead and schedule the news conference and I’ll tell them what I did.”

“Mr. President,” the Chief of Staff said, “May I suggest that instead of a news conference, you address the nation?”

“Why not?” Santorum said. “At least that way, I won’t have to deal with the media rewriting my speech.”

Santorum got on the phone to Moscow and told Putin that the entire scheme was coming apart. Since it was his idea, Santorum said, he’d take the fall and keep Putin out of it, as much as humanly possible. Putin was startled at first but then realized that if he got involved, Russia stood to gain in a big way. He told Santorum that it was nonsense that Santorum should have to take all the blame. He’d been a willing participant and he’d join the President in an unheard of live joint broadcast and openly admit his part in the affair. Santorum flat out near dropped the phone. He agreed, however and said that he’d have his Chief of Staff work with his Russian counterpart and they somehow get it put together.

Palmdale, just before 6pm PST...

“What do you mean a joint news conference with Putin?” Gary asked. “Hey, you don’t suppose that I actually got it right for a change?”

“Partner, I’ve heard tell that if you give a monkey a typewriter and enough paper and time, eventually that monkey will reproduce the works of William Shakespeare,” Ron said, “So, anything is possible, but I wouldn’t hold my breath.”

Tonight I am addressing the people of the United States, the citizens of the Russia Federation and the world in general, Santorum began. I will be joined later by Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation who will address his own remarks to you.

A leader must make difficult choices. I made such a choice a few months ago when I decided that the US had to do something new in the ongoing War on Terrorism. The entire world has witnessed a series of terrorists acts aimed against countries throughout the world. My idea was to take terrorism to the terrorists. I discussed that matter with some trusted advisors and decided to go ahead with the idea. Since our nation lacked sufficient assets to conduct the operation, I contracted President Putin and asked for his assistance. We held the mini-summit to iron out the details of the plan and subsequently SEALS from the US Navy together with Russian Federation Spetsnaz conducted a joint training operation.

Agents of the CIA and the Russian Federation’s Federal Security Service joined together in Israel to locate and identify possible terrorist cells and to destroy them. Once our agents had identified a terrorist cell, the Specials Forces people were brought in and the cell was simply wiped out. We had 2 very successful operations. The US and Russian agents were being aided by a third party. The information supplied by this 3rd party had been very reliable and on the 3rd operation, we had no reason to believe otherwise. Nevertheless, we didn’t do our usual thorough job of checking the facts. As a conse-

quence, the 3rd operation was, as you have heard, a tragic mistake. I accept full responsibility for the errors and freely admit them.

How many more millions have to die before the terrorists get the message that there are better means to resolve problems between peoples? I wish I had the answer, but I don't. I was faced today by an irresolvable conflict. The CIA has developed information concerning another terrorist plot. The FBI, ATF and CIA have worked diligently to uncover the details of this plot but frankly, have been unsuccessful. The conflict I faced was in my credibility. If I simply announced the new plot, most would have seen it as an attempt on my part to simply deflect the criticism in the media. I was left with no choice except to bring out the truth.

I do not regret my decision, except in that it caused the loss of innocent lives. President Putin and I will have discussions in the coming days to determine if we should continue with this plan or abandon it altogether. I will now turn the address over to President Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation.

Comrades, I stand before you tonight in an historic joint address. It was as President Santorum told you. Many of you may recall the events when Chechnyan rebels killed our children in 2004. I reacted strongly in that matter, yet it made little difference. As you may recall, a former American President called upon the UN to help restore order in the United States after the terrorist attack with the stolen Russian nuclear weapons. The Russian Federation participated in that exercise and eventually withdrew.

When President Santorum first proposed this plan to me, I agreed to meet with him as he outlined. President Santorum has taken full responsibility for these actions, but in truth, I bear my part of the responsibility. I, too, do not regret my decision and it remains to be seen whether our two countries will continue to attack the terrorists on their own terms. No doubt the terrorists are listening to this very broadcast at this very moment. Mark my words, those of you who would bring terrorism to the nations of the world. We shall hunt you down. We shall destroy you. This is no idle boast, because together the United States of America and the Russian Federation have now shown that we are as capable of returning that very terrorism to you.

Thank you President Putin, Santorum said when Putin had finished. I will end on this note. Judge me, us, as you will. However, as long as I remain President of the United States, this nation will no longer stand idly by while terrorists kill our citizens. God Bless America and God Bless the Russian Federation.

And thus ended what was perhaps the most historic telecast in the history of the modern world. Two leaders, from nations with differing ideals had joined together to take terrorism to the terrorists. Then, when their efforts had been found out, through an error, the same two men had openly admitted their mistakes. There simply was no precedent for such an event. An American politician telling the truth? A Russian politician confirming that truth and admitting his own part in the matter? Unbelievable! Absolutely, totally unbelievable. The media was totally dumbfounded. In fact, the entire world was dumb-

founded. I do believe that this was the first time that I ever saw Wolf Blitzer at a loss for words.

The President's Chief of Staff had been correct in his assessment. Where on earth had Santorum found this guy? There was that TV show that Gary had come to hate called *The West Wing*. Gary hated the show because of the position that Martin Sheen had taken on the Iraq war. And, not even on that show did they ever once imagine such a situation, at least not up to the point that Gary had stopped watching it. Gary had thrown away every movie in his collection with Sheen, Sarandon and that bunch he called some nasty names.

"Son-of-a bitch," Ron exclaimed. "That guy should stay as President until he dies."

"Ron you have to know that the Democrats in Congress are going to try and impeach the guy," Gary said. "I guess that I was right after all, not that it matters. This will probably spell the end of Santorum's political career."

"You know what, Gary," Clarence said, "I wouldn't be so sure of that. Anyway, that speech proves that you were wrong. Apparently not every politician is a professional liar."

"Do you believe this Putin guy?" Gary asked. "Hell, his are bigger than Gorbachev's. What was that crap about another terrorist plot? They didn't seem to elaborate on that too much. Guess that explains why my gut is going off."

"Why did they need to elaborate, Gary?" Clarence laughed, "You've already figured out it's the Africans."

"I remember what I said and how I embarrassed myself Clarence," Gary replied, "You don't have to rub it in."

"Did you get your cape back from the cleaners yet Gary?" Ron asked, "It might come in handy."

"What cape?" Gary asked. "Anyway, the Citadel is all stocked up, but if there are terrorists about, I expect we'd better order more supplies."

"We can't," Ron remarked.

"Why not?"

"There isn't any more space to put any more supplies. We overstocked last time, don't you remember?" Ron asked.

"Remember what?" Gary asked.

Somalia...

Farrah was livid. The Americans and Russians had betrayed Muslims everywhere. Not only were they killing Holy Warriors, but also they had resorted to the killing of the innocent. They had to be made to pay, but how? Perhaps these discussions that the Presidents had talked about would occur in America and he could use his cell. How long had they been there now, 6-7 years? They had reported that they had good jobs, a large quantity of explosives and if called upon to do so, could steal whatever their employers had on hand to supplement what they had on hand. These men were his best explosives experts, too. The US Marines didn't have anything on his 5 men. It had taken nearly a full year to move them to the US and integrate them in the society. They were all naturalized citizens, just as he had once been. They weren't hiding in some apartment waiting to be caught. It was the perfect plan. And if that Putin did go to the US, they would be waiting for him.

"Remember that we over ordered supplies the last time," Ron said.

"That's right," Gary said, "I remember now. But what about the supplies for the Citadel?"

"I'll take care of it partner," Ron said, "You'd better get some rest."

"I didn't, you know," Gary said.

"Didn't what?"

"I didn't remember to take my pills last night at supper and there I was lying in bed at 2am wide awake," Gary explained. "So I didn't get any rest."

"So what did you do?" Ron quickly asked before Gary forgot what the subject was.

"I got up and took my pills and was asleep in 15 minutes," Gary replied. "Did I tell you that I got my cape back from the cleaners?"

"What cape?" Ron asked.

"Do you have a cape Gary?" Clarence asked.

Ain't payback a bear? Like I said, with old Gar-Bear, you never knew when he was shining you on. Even Ron had trouble at times and he had warned Clarence about that very thing. But then again, 2 solar panels were better than a package of batteries, weren't they? And that was another thing that you had to watch about old Gar-Bear. He was a sneaky son of a gun. His favorite word was payback.

The Three Amigos Part III – The Three Amigos Ride Again – Chapter 63 – The Twelfth of Never

*Until the Twelfth of Never
and that's a long, long time*

John Royce Mathis was born on September 30, 1935. In early 1956, Johnny was asked to attend the trials for the 1956 Olympic teams that would travel to Melbourne, Australia that summer. (High jumper and hurdler.) Johnny gave up his chance to become a member of the USA Olympic Team. He went to New York to record his first album in March of 1956. As the expression goes, the rest is history.

It wasn't the twelfth of never; it was the 12th of April, 2010. If you could remember when Ronald Reagan died you can remember how all of a sudden he was one of the greatest Presidents in the history of the US. The Three Amigos had lived through the Reagan years and while they didn't disagree, the stories sure were being reported a lot differently than they'd remember things happening. The point was that President Rick Santorum had become an overnight hero and was being compared to the likes of Reagan, Lincoln and JFK. Maybe that Chief of Staff of his ought to run for President, he was one smart fella. Then, of course, almost no one knew that.

Santorum and Putin had talked many times and had finally agreed that Putin would make a trip to Russia's new best friend, the United States. They'd already decided not to reveal what they were going to do, just to keep the terrorists guessing. They would give a lot of hints and make some implications, but no one would be quite sure. The mini-summit was scheduled for 10May10 through 14May10. And the whole world knew about the mini-summit, including Farrah. The itinerary of the visit that was given out was very sketchy. Farrah alerted his 5 men and told them that this wasn't a suicide mission. They were to put together all of the explosives they could muster and get themselves to Washington, figure out where to plant a bomb that would do the most damage and set it up on a timer. He told them that even if the bomb were discovered, it would send a clear message.

President Santorum, a conservative Republican had been very controversial as a Representative and Senator. That, of course, depended upon your viewpoint. The liberals certainly didn't like him even though he had at one time co-sponsored a bill with none other than John Kerry. Santorum was pro-family, to the point some thought, that he'd lost his perspective. He was outspoken, but is that a bad thing? After becoming President, he'd established his 'western White House' in the Lehigh Valley of eastern Pennsylvania.

In 1976, as an auditor for the Iowa Department of Revenue, old Gar-Bear had been to the Lehigh Valley. It was the bi-centennial and Gary and another fella had been fortunate enough to get sent to Philadelphia that fall to audit some companies based in Pennsylvania. He got to see the Liberty Bell, couldn't find Davey Crockett's patch however, and had spent a day on Liberty Mall, learning about the heritage of the country.

He'd been to Allentown and Bethlehem and had shopped in the dozens of then prolific 'seconds stores' peddling leftover suits and the like. Hadn't been back since and had no idea how much the Lehigh Valley had changed.

During those many conversations setting up the mini-summit, Putin and Santorum concluded that if ever there were an opportunity for terrorists to strike, it would be the mini-summit. Consequently, they decided to use the event as a trap to root out any remaining terrorists cells in the US. The agenda was sketchy because it was as phony as a \$3 bill. It included 2 days at the White House followed by 2 days at Camp David. On Friday morning, there was to be a joint news conference in the Rose Garden. Then, supposedly, Putin would board his jet, a 777 paid for with some of that \$10 billion, and return to Moscow. That was the published agenda.

The real agenda had the two men at the 'western White House' enjoying golf at the many courses that now littered the Lehigh Valley. What was to say that they couldn't work out the whole thing over a round or two of golf? Say, does Putin even play golf? Didn't really matter, and as I've said the whole thing was a sham from the get-go. They'd already worked out the whole thing on the phone. They were going to continue those hits against the terrorists, but were going to move much more cautiously and were going to be flat sure of their information before they struck again. And, they'd also decided that they should expand their efforts. Why should Israel get all the benefits of their efforts?

That Intel that Goss and Santorum had talked about in that meeting? Goss's operatives had picked up the faintest hint of a rumor that Farrah had a sleeper cell in the US. But they could not verify the rumor. Still, it was a hot item that figured prominently in Santorum and Putin's plans. The FSS sent two planeloads of people to the US; one openly and one in the dead of night. The first group joined with the Secret Service and other agencies to 'lock down Washington' in preparation for the mini-summit. The second group hooked up with the Secret Service and were working in the Lehigh Valley, almost as a just in case.

The sleeper who lived in Wyoming was the western-most sleeper. He blasted coal. He'd given notice to his employer well in advance, had rented a moving van and had loaded his explosives on the van. He told Ryder that he was moving to Washington DC but that his family and he were going to see the country and that he'd probably have the truck for about a month. He used the truck to move their possessions to a storage locker in Denver, loaded the explosives and added a layer of boxes to disguise the whole thing. Then he loaded his wife and son into the truck and headed east. When they got to DC, the plan was to put the wife and kid on a plane to LA. And he saw the country, just like he said he was going to. He had to make 4 more stops to pick up those other explosives. The guy had tried to think of everything and even threw in a couple of bags of fertilizer with that fake layer of boxes.

Palmdale...

“Here you go,” Gary said handing Ron the cape he’d asked Sharon to run off on her machine. “I got my cape back from the cleaners.”

“I didn’t doubt you for a minute, Gar-Bear,” Ron smiled. Sharon had mentioned the cape to Linda who told Ron all about it. And Ronald had brought Clarence up to date. Gary realized that his play had bombed and tossed the cape on a chair.

“So, what do you make of this mini-summit?” Ron asked.

“Dumbest thing I ever heard of,” Gary said, “They could have worked the whole thing out over the phone. But no, millions of more taxpayers’ dollars wasted on some damned show. Say, I heard that Putin has a Boeing 777, where did he get that?”

“Yeah,” Clarence added. “Probably end up there’s a terrorist cell somewhere in the US just waiting for something like this. They end up blowing Washington all to hell.”

“Putin bought the 777 from Boeing,” Ron said, “McDonald Douglas was fresh out of 777’s that day.”

“That wasn’t what I meant and you know it Ron,” Gary grouched. “Where did he get the money?”

“Who knows?” Ron replied, “Probably from those oil sales or from the \$10 billion we gave them.”

“Why did we give them \$10 billion?” Clarence asked.

“Who knows?” Ron repeated, “Maybe it was hush money like our giving them the Middle East.”

“I sure wish the bimbo hadn’t done that,” Gary said.

“Done what?” Ron asked.

“Given the Russians the Middle East,” Gary said. “Hell we could have stolen it ourselves and wouldn’t have to pay those Russians for the oil.”

“We couldn’t do that,” Ron said, “The LA Times had an editorial explaining that. They claimed that it would have shown our true colors as an Imperialist Nation. They also had an article saying that the US Constitution was out of date. Claimed that all of the countries in Europe had rewritten their Constitutions and had gone liberal, while the US clung to an out-dated Federalist Constitution that was against poor people.” Ron was right in a way; half of the US had been convinced that the war with Iraq had really just been over the oil in the first place. Kerry voters?

The Somali terrorist had made his way across the country picking up the explosives

from his compatriots. They pulled into Washington about 1May10. There was nothing particular unusual about a black family moving to Washington, but the government security types gave the truck the once over with an explosives detector and man did it sing. They opened the back of the truck up, saw the fertilizer and because traffic was backed up, made an erroneous assumption. Stuff happens, even in the best of times. Normally, they would have torn that truck apart. Say did I mention that those government people had no idea that the Washington business was a sham concocted by Putin and Santorum? It lent an air of credence to the whole thing.

The terrorist took the wife and kid to the airport in the car he'd unloaded from the hauler behind the truck. He also picked up the other Somali explosives experts. They picked up the agenda, but were befuddled by its vagueness. There was no way they could get anywhere near the White House or Camp David. The Secret Service had been compartmentalized; in this instance the left hand didn't know what the right had was doing. Those people working in Washington didn't know that they were being used and they took the matter extremely seriously. Never mind the screw up with the truckload of explosives, like I said, stuff happens.

After Gary's second crack Clarence realized that despite having 2 half black grandchildren, Gary had no idea what it was like to be a black man in America. So, he'd tried to explain, but Gary was really dense. On the other hand, those 5 Somali men had figured out pretty quickly what it meant to be a black man in America. And never mind their instructions from Farrah; they were going to set off that truckload of explosives, even if they had to blow up a golf course or a public building. They figured that would send a bigger message, if I were to hazard a guess.

10May10...

Putin's 777 arrived at Andrews Air Force Base around 8pm and he was met by Santorum with Marine One. Marine One has a rather distinctive paint job and no one noticed the lookalike chopper with 2 lookalike actors proceeding from the chopper to the White House. Exactly one person knew of the switch, the Chief of the White House Security detail who was there to greet them. The real Marine One landed at an out of the way, little used airport and the 2 men switched to one of those Special Ops VH-53D Pave-Lo III choppers. They're pretty close to the same bird, depending on which Marine One was being used. The 2 men and the security detail then proceeded to the Presidential Retreat in the Lehigh Valley. Security in Pennsylvania was tight, but not quite as tight as in Washington to avoid attracting attention. The FBI even had an FBI Rapid Deployment Team standing by as a precaution.

The two men were having a great time relaxing and enjoying the benefit of a week off at government expense. Every once in a while, some golfer would stare at the 2 men, perhaps in recognition, a SS agent dressed up like a caddy would come along and say something like, "Yeah I know. It's amazing. Those two guys have been friends for years and lately they're always being mistaken as that Putin guy or the President." Worked every time. Or maybe the golfer saw the bulge under the guy's arm, who knows? On the

11th, Putin got to visiting about a new semi-tractor the Russians were trying to build. Santorum suggested that they run up to Allentown to Mack Trucks and get whatever information Mack had to offer. He told his Chief of Staff to make it happen.

Meanwhile, the terrorists had given up in frustration in Washington and after an argument that lasted a while had decided to go to, guess where? The Mack Truck World Headquarters in Allentown, PA! What was the name of that movie? *When Worlds Collide*? Sorry, but it didn't happen that way. The Security folks got extremely nervous in a big hurry over the change in plans and they did 2 things: 1) send a detachment of FSS and SS agents to Allentown; and, 2) as added insurance deployed that Rapid Deployment Team. With the Pave-Low less than 11 minutes out, the terrorists arrived in Allentown. It took them 10 more minutes to locate and arrive at the Mack Worldwide HQ. It took the RDT about 25 seconds to surround that rental truck and another 5 seconds for the Somalis to set off the explosives. The Pave-Low III was just beginning to flare for landing when the truckload of explosives went off. (Wouldn't this be a great place to end a chapter?)

The rental truck was out front and the chopper was landing a ways off. Santorum was always flown by pilots from HMX-1; the few, the proud, the brave, and right good pilots besides. The blast wave rolled over the Pave-Low III but the Marine pilot kept control and pulled the bird back into the air headed the direction he'd come from. Ever try to tell the President of any country what to do? You can tell them, but hell, they're the President and they pretty much do what they want. Like take off the seatbelts before they are supposed to. They were tossed about the cabin when the blast wave hit, but nothing was broken. A few cuts and scrapes, but they'd heal. Santorum was po'd at the security lapse and probably a whole lot embarrassed. Personally, I say the FBI RDT did a bang up job under the circumstances. The terrorists and the RDT were the only people killed. Mack could always repair the building. The attack, though not aimed at the two leaders, had very nearly taken them out forcing an immediate change of plans. The Pave-Low headed straight for Camp David where those two actors had moved to earlier that morning.

There wasn't much left of the Somalis, but the print off a fingertip recovered at the scene led to the identification of one of the men as a Somali immigrant. And that unofficial task group of Santorum's jumped to all of the right conclusions. Well, not exactly, but the results were the same. They had Farrah pinpointed, just in case, and the next thing you knew a C-17 was headed for Somalia carrying one of those GBU43 MOAB things. It wasn't up close and personal, either, but like before, the results were the same. And, of course, by 2010 everyone had seen that MOAB test tape from the test at Eglin AFB on 21Nov03. As a matter of fact, the FBI was operating outside of the envelope and that MOAB exploded just as Putin's 777 cleared the ground at Andrews. The news conference at the Rose Garden had been rather subdued with Santorum and Putin saying that the world would have their conclusion very, very soon. Kind of mysterious, if you ask me, but you didn't, did you.

Palmdale...

“That news conference was pretty disappointing,” Gary said, “I had the impression that Santorum and Putin were going to say something worthwhile. We still don’t know what they decided.”

“They said very, very soon, Gary,” Clarence repeated. “Hush up, here’s some breaking news. It might just be confirmation that those guys were Somalis.”

“FOX News has just learned that a MOAB was dropped on the headquarters of Somali strongman Hussein Mohamed Farrah, son of warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid who died on August 1, 1996. Aidid was the warlord indirectly involved in that incident in Mogadishu where 18 Marines were killed. You may also recall that the last 2 Congressional Medals of Honor awarded went posthumously to 2 American soldiers who died in that incident. Shortly after the bombing incident was initially reported, the White House Press Secretary told a hastily called news conference that the bombing was President Santorum and President Putin of the Russian Federation’s answer to the world about the plans to deal with terrorists.”

“Guess you got that confirmation you wanted Clarence,” Gary chuckled.

“In a backhanded way, I suppose that I did fellas,” Clarence agreed.

“Getting out there on the net and reading stuff about places like Somalia, Latin America and other places is quite the experience,” Gary pointed. “Try it some time. Put Somalia in a search engine and then read the reports. It’s quite an education. If only 25% of what I read was true, our hands weren’t totally clean on that deal.”

“There you go again, sounding like a liberal,” Ron pointed out.

“Ronald,” Gary replied, “I’d prefer to think of it as having a balanced point of view. Where there’s smoke there’s usually fire. Besides, I can make my point in one word.”

“I’ll take that challenge,” Ron dared Gary, “Give me the one word.”

“Watergate,” Gary said, frowning.

Iran-Contra was 2 words and the media hadn’t hung a label on Boxer’s deal with Putin because maybe they didn’t know about it. And, for some strange reason they weren’t exactly sure how to handle this business with Santorum and Putin. Then again, they didn’t have all of the facts. I think I recall opening the subject with a question, like what about the one’s we didn’t know about? Guess you know about this one now, huh? What? No more terrorists sneaking around in the US? Never happen.

Washington...

“He can’t play golf worth a crap,” Santorum laughed. “What’s the word on that bombing

in Allentown?”

“Mr. President,” Mueller replied, “All we’re able to verify was that it was 5 Somalis, and it took DNA to do that.”

“Mr. President,” Goss quickly followed, “We’re getting more information in now that the MOAB was dropped on Somalia and Farrah was taken out. It seems that people are just a tiny bit more willing to talk. To make a long story short, it appears that we got it right and wrong.”

“What do you mean right and wrong?” Santorum asked mystified by the cryptic remark.

“Farrah was behind it; that’s been confirmed,” Goss explained. “However, the mission, or so we’ve been told was to take the 2 of you out in Washington. Speculation in Somalia suggests that for some unknown reason, those 5 Somalis disregarded their instructions and decided to forego hitting Putin and yourself. Apparently the new target was that Mack Truck World Headquarters. Again, that’s the speculation we’re picking up from Somalia.”

“Then Putin and I just...” Santorum started to say.

“Showed up at the wrong place at the wrong time,” Prescott finished the President’s sentence.

“This is so complicated,” Santorum observed, “That no one would believe it or could be made to understand. What say we keep this particular bit of information among the 6 of us?”

“Are you going to inform Putin?” the Chief of Staff asked.

“What would you advise?” Santorum asked back.

“I don’t think I would,” the Chief of Staff suggested, “The basic facts are correct. There were 5 Somalis terrorists who exploded a bomb in Allentown just as Putin and you show up. We retaliated against the actual perpetrator of the original plot. I’d say let it lie.”

Truscott, the Director of the ATF who rarely spoke at these meetings said, “It won’t wash.”

“What do you mean by that?” Santorum asked.

“The trip to Allentown was a last minute affair, as I understand it,” Truscott said. “There was no way the terrorists could have known that the 2 of you would be there. It won’t take a rocket scientist to figure that much out. We tracked the signatures of some of the explosives. From what we’ve been able to gather, they appear to have come from various lots sold to five different mining operations over a period of years. But, there are so

many different explosives signatures to match we may never know. Anyway, each of those 5 companies employed a naturalized Somali, so this thing was years in the making.”

“Ok, you have my attention,” Santorum announced. “Tell me more.”

“Bottom line here is that we ended up doing all of the right things for all of the wrong reasons,” Truscott summarized.

“So, we need to play it off that angle,” the Chief of Staff interrupted.

“And just what do you mean?” Santorum asked, reaching for the bottle of Tylenol he kept in his desk.

“We should play on the credibility you’ve build up with the public, Putin and the world as a whole,” the Chief of Staff said. “Never lie, I’ve told you that, before. On the other hand, nothing says you have to tell everyone the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you God. It’s not like you’re under oath here. Give everyone the facts, and omit the bit about right target for wrong reasons. The media will have a feeding frenzy trying to pick your statement apart, but if you stick with the truth, they’ll lose interest. Give Putin a heads up so he can avoid putting his foot in his mouth. As for the rest of it, that’s up to you.”

“Well why not,” Santorum grinned, “It worked the last time.”

Worked this time, too. Santorum called Moscow and gave Putin the entire story and explained how he was going to handle it. He suggested that Putin might want to check for immigrants that were planning the same thing in his country. Then, Santorum held a press conference and laid the ‘whole’ thing out. He said that while Putin and he were the original targets, it had only been a fluke that the terrorists had ended up in Allentown at the same moment Putin and he had shown up.

When a reporter asked him about the MOAB dropped on Somalia, Santorum fell back on the Intel Goss had developed and the fingerprint the FBI had gotten in Allentown. Then he said that he thought the reaction was proportionate in the circumstances. Neither the US or Russian Federation had nuked Somalia, he was quick to point out. And Farrah might have been a naturalized US citizen and a member of the Marine Corp at one time, but people obviously change. Without going into too much detail, Rick Santorum had given the press just enough of the truth and omitted any lies. As his Chief of Staff had predicted, the media tried to run with the story, but it got them nowhere. The media was so predictable, at times. Of course, Geraldo wasn’t around anymore to stir the pot.

Palmdale...

“Watch the news conference?” Ron asked.

“What news conference?” Gary inquired.

“The President was explaining what really went down with the bombing in Allentown that almost took him and Putin out,” Ron explained. “Turned out to be a fluke thing. Sort of a lucky accident for the Somali terrorists; but they dropped that MOAB on Farrah and took him out. He was behind the whole thing.”

“Really?” Clarence asked.

“Yes, really, Clarence,” Ron affirmed. “I got the distinct impression that there was more to it than Santorum wasn’t telling, but if he lied, the media will rake him over the coals.”

“I told you politicians were professional liars, Clarence,” Gary chuckled, “I’m going to end up being right, for a change.”

“You have been having a run of bad luck with that gut of yours partner,” Ron observed. “Maybe it’s good that you didn’t get that patent.”

“Hell Ron that all started a long time ago,” Gary said. “On 10/4/04 when Space Ship One was making its second flight, I’d have bet a grand it wouldn’t succeed.”

“How do you remember stuff like that Gary?” Clarence asked.

“I don’t know,” Gary admitted, “Seems like it was only yesterday. Some of the patriot writers took a hit back then, too. A fella said that our cops weren’t believable.”

“What do you mean?” Ron asked.

“Well, take Johnny for an example,” Gary said. “I’ve used him in some of my stories. Johnny is a good cop, but he’s also a human being. Even though Darlene and him are divorced, they have a couple of kids. I played up the angle that Johnny would take care of his kids. Probably didn’t make that clear; but I treated him as sort of a rogue cop.”

“Well when TSHTF or it’s TEOTWAWKI,” Ron observed, “Anything can happen and who really knows how a Deputy Sergeant, excuse me Lieutenant, for the LA County Sheriff’s Department will really act?”

“My point exactly,” Gary agreed. “And in my fiction I played Sandy a lot different than she really is. Had her running a side business in class III firearms. And people really don’t know with a guy like me when I fabricating or telling the truth.”

“Keep it that way, partner,” Ron suggested, “No one needs to know how it really is.”

“How is it really?” Clarence asked.

“Hey, I have to do what Ronald tells me Clarence,” Gary replied, “Don’t ask me, I’d probably lie unless I was lying.”

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